TABITHA'S GLORY

She smiled with satisfaction, and straightway turned to her wardrobe in search of the garments in question.

TABITHA'S GLORY

VOLUME II
IN THE IVY HALL SERIES

BY

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CHAPTER I

CARRIE SAYS GOOD-BYE

The sun was setting over Silver Bow; the western sky seemed afire with colors which glowed and faded, shifted and changed, reached out long fingers to touch the white cloud-bank hanging like nightcaps over each mountain peak, then receded into the flaming ball of the sinking sun, only to burst forth again into a more glorious display of splendor, as if loath to let their gorgeous beauty die with the dying day.

Tabitha had climbed to the topmost ridge behind her little desert home—a favorite haunt of hers—and stood silhouetted against the glowing sky as she watched the ever-changing scene, grown so familiar since she had come to live in this little forsaken-looking mining town seven years before. Her thin, dark face and

bright, black eyes were luminous with gladness, for to her this desert sky was like a picture-book, and she never wearied of watching the wonderful scenes painted there by the hand of the Master Artist. But even as she watched the fading pictures, she kept glancing over her shoulder, down into the little cup-like hollow, already lying in the twilight of early evening, where stood the three buildings which made up that part of town,—her father's modest cottage, the splendid Carson home, and the dilapidated haunted house still further down the road,—and each time she looked her black eyes grew blacker with anxiety and impatience, and a frown puckered her forehead into a dozen wrinkles. At last, unable to restrain her uneasiness any longer, she exclaimed with savage emphasis, "I don't see what is keeping her so long! She said she would come—"

"And I have fulfilled my promise, Kitty Catt," answered a laughing voice behind her, as two soft, plump arms stole about Tabitha's neck and turned the flushed, oval face back into the light of the setting sun. "See, here we are, General Sherman and I. Why,

Tabitha Catt! What have you done to yourself? You're as thin as a toothpick!"

"Carrie Carson!" was the echoing cry, as Tabitha freed herself from the strangling arms only to wrap her own about the sweet, blue-eyed maid hugging her so fiercely.

"Where have you been all this time? And you, old General? You are traitors to your old friend. I have been waiting here for ages and ages, and had just about made up my mind that you weren't coming at all to-night—"

"Now, you knew better than that—"

"But the sun is almost gone, and we were going to watch it set together this last night before we go back to Ivy Hall."

"I came as soon as I could," Carrie interrupted, a cloud passing over her gentle face at her companion's words, and for the first time, Tabitha noticed a suspicious redness about the blue eyes, and caught the sound of a slight quiver in the usually happy voice; and feeling in some way to blame for the trouble, whatever it might be, which had ruffled that serene disposition to the point of tears, she hugged the plump little figure with

fiercer tenderness, and whispered contritely, "Never mind anything I said, Carrie. I'm glad enough that you could get away from your company in time to see the after-glow. That is really the prettiest part of the sunset, I think. When the clouds look like a great furnace of fire it always makes me remember that the day is gone and I haven't finished hundreds of things I meant to do; but the after-glow—that just smooths out the humps and kinks of everything that has gone wrong, and somehow gives me the feeling that to-morrow will be better."

"Yes, papa says in his funny way that these lovely twilights seem to iron out the wrinkles in the clo'es of day. It sounds just the same as if he meant c-l-o-s-e, but he really intends folks to think it is c-l-o-t-h-e-s. I thought his company never would get through eating this evening, and, of course, it wouldn't have been proper for me to run away until they left the table, at least. That's why I am so late. But truly, Pussy, you look dreadfully thin. You never were as fat as me—I mean, as I am,—but you are terribly—peaked. Isn't that what your Aunt Maria calls it? Have

you been sick this summer and never let me know a word about it?"

"No, indeed-y," laughed Tabitha happily. "I am as gay as a lark myself, but father—"

"Yes, I knew he was badly hurt. We hated so much to have you leave school to help take care of him. Was it—was it as bad as you expected?" Carrie's voice had unconsciously grown awed and hushed, for she had a wholesome fear of the tall, stern, unfather-like man who was Tabitha's one living parent; and her heart had often gone out to this motherless little girl who had no one of kin to love her, except the big brother Tom, now away at college.

"Worse," promptly answered Tabitha, with unexpected cheerfulness, smiling down into the sympathetic face at her side. Then, seeing the puzzled, questioning look in her friend's eyes, she continued more soberly, and with a shudder of recollection, "It was perfectly terrible, Carrie,—at first. But oh, it did end so beautifully! It's like a fairy tale. I can't make it seem really true half the time. Didn't your father tell you? But no, I begged Tom when he wrote the news to ask your father

not to say anything about it to you. I wanted to tell you all myself. At first I was going to write like Tom did, and then we heard that you were coming home early in August, so I waited for that; and when you changed your minds, I—well, I just kept on waiting—"

"Please don't keep on waiting any longer," shrieked Carrie abruptly, hopping up and down in excited anticipation. "I'm just dying to hear what has happened. Did your father—was he—is he—" She stopped short and her cheeks flamed as she suddenly remembered that she could not ask Tabitha the questions which were trembling on the tip of her tongue, for fear of wounding her friend's sensitive nature.

But the black-eyed girl seemed to read her very thoughts, and without hesitation completed Carrie's unfinished sentence. "A *real* father now? Yes,—not like yours, because he is a different man; but oh, Carrie, he is a darling! I never was so happy in all my life! Think of having a father like other girls! One who cares about your being his little girl, who loves you and kisses you every time he comes home or goes away—really kisses you!

And wants you to sit on his knee, and asks you what kind of clothes you would like, and how you're going to have your dresses made, and is interested in whatever you do!"

Briefly she related the happenings of that busy summer, about her father's delirium, of his unwillingness to let anyone but her minister to his wants, of the coming of Decker Simmons just when they were beginning to give up hope, of the gold piece found in the crack of the floor, and of her father's changed attitude when the fever had burned out.

"And oh, Carrie," she finished in tones of ecstasy, "he said Tom and I might change our names!"

"Tabitha! How perfectly lovely! Now you can be Theodora Gabrielle for sure."

Tabitha smiled reminiscently; but every trace of bitterness was gone from her heart as she recalled that darkest of dark days when in her childish longing for the love denied her in her home, she had changed her name without her father's knowledge, and what direful punishment it had brought.

"Is that what you will call yourself now?" persisted Carrie, as Tabitha sat silent, staring

meditatively into the darkening valley below.

"No."

Carrie was startled at the brief but decisive reply. "What, then?"

"Just Tabitha Catt."

"Oh!" For a moment it seemed unbelievable that anyone who hated her name with the ferocity Tabitha had always displayed would still hold to that obnoxious title when she had the privilege of discarding it. So Carrie was silent. Then she shyly ventured, "And Tom?"

"Is Tom still."

"For all time?"

"Yes."

"Don't you think you will ever wish you had changed?"

Slowly Tabitha shook her head.

"But why? I always thought you'd change it in a minute if you ever got a chance."

"So did I until I got the chance."

"And then you didn't do it!"

"No."

"It—it—seems so queer. I can't understand why—"

Suddenly Tabitha wheeled, caught Carrie by both shoulders and looked searchingly into the sweet blue eyes as she demanded with her old-time fierceness, "Would you love me any more if my name was Theodora Gabrielle, or Marguerite, or—or Chrystobel?"

"You know I wouldn't. I couldn't, Puss!"

"Would your father?"

"No. Nobody would."

"That's what Tom and I decided, too, when we came to think it over. So we kept our old names. They are not as pretty as some other people's, but, after all, it isn't one's *name* that counts in this world."

She said this in such sage tones that even Tom would have smiled had he heard her, but Carrie thought it perfectly splendid of her chum to take such a stand after all the unhappiness the hateful name had caused her, and seizing the black head scarcely visible now in the gathering night, she hugged it with such vim that both girls were nearly unseated. But her action recalled them to their surroundings, and as they recovered their balance with much laughter, Tabitha sighed regretfully, "Well, I suppose we must be going,

Carrie. The trail will soon be too faint to follow, and I have no hankering for getting tangled up in the mesquite on the way down. Wave good-bye to our mountains, Carrie, it's the last time we will see them for months. Think of it! At this time to-morrow night we will be getting settled once more in Ivy Hall—"

"I won't."

"What?" The mournful note in Carrie's voice stopped Tabitha in her tracks as she was cautiously picking her way down the rough mountain side, and she gripped the girl savagely by the shoulders, as she tried to make up her mind whether or not she had heard aright, for the darkness had descended swiftly over the desert and she could no longer read her companion's face. "What did you say?"

"I won't be getting settled at Ivy Hall. I'm not going back there this year."

"Carrie! You are fooling!"

"Do I sound like it?" demanded Carrie with a reproachful sob.

"No, dear. I'm sorry I said that," cried Tabitha remorsefully, gathering the unhappy figure in her arms as they stumbled over the

rocks, having hopelessly lost the trail in the excitement of the moment. "I didn't mean a word of it, but you took me so by surprise! Why aren't you going back? You never hinted a word of such a thing in any of your letters. I am not the only one who has had secrets. Why didn't you tell me before?"

"I never knew myself until to-night," sobbed Carrie, giving way to her tears. "Papa has thought for some weeks that maybe I couldn't go back this year, but he hoped things would turn out all right, so neither he nor mamma said anything to me about it until to-day, when they made certain that he had to go back East again."

"But I don't see what that has to do with your returning to Ivy Hall. He often takes trips like that."

"He's to be gone a whole year this time, and mamma won't listen to his going for so long unless she can be with him."

"Even then you would be all right at Ivy Hall."

"Yes, I s'pose I would," Carrie answered hesitatingly. "But it would be dreadful lonesome knowing that papa and mamma

weren't at Silver Bow where I could reach them in a day. Besides, they won't leave *me* for a whole year, either. I've *got* to go with them, Pussy."

"Oh, dear!" With a great wail of woe at thought of separation from this boon companion again, Tabitha forgot the dignity of her fifteen years, and cast herself flat among the rocks just as she had done hundreds of times before, to sob out her grief and despair on the sympathetic desert bosom. But she had miscalculated the place, and instead of finding the hard rocks beneath her as she had expected, she landed plump in the middle of a huge mesquite bush, and her exclamation of self-pity changed to groans of genuine pain, as the cruel thorns tore her arms and scratched her face. Fortunately, she was wearing a heavy duck suit which did not catch and cling to the ugly branches as almost any other material would have done, and with Carrie's help she was soon able to free herself from her predicament.

But the accident was effectual in turning her thoughts, and when she stood once more by Carrie's side, carefully searching a path

down the treacherous mountain, she had taken up her rôle of comforter again, and was trying to speak words of cheer to the blue-eyed maid who wanted to return with her mates to Ivy Hall, and yet could not bear the thought of being separated from her loved ones for a whole long year. And Carrie was comforted.

"You are such a darling," she sighed, snuggling closer to Tabitha, as they reached the familiar valley path, and strolled slowly along in the darkness toward the twinkling lights of home. "I knew you would care, but I never thought it would mean so much to you, Puss. I—I was afraid you were beginning to like Chrystobel better—"

"Carrie Carson, you little wretch! Are you jealous?"

"But you were with her so much," Carrie defended.

"Because I couldn't be with you at all hardly. Cassandra was always poking in, and you listened to her plans instead of paying attention to the rest of us."

"Yes," sighed Carrie regretfully. "But it was the easiest way to get along with Cas-

sandra, Puss. She never *would* let up until I gave in and she had her own way. After all, I'm glad I don't have to room with her this year. I am to have a tutor all of my own to go with us wherever we go. But I'll always be wondering what you girls are doing at Ivy Hall, and envying you the larks you are sure to have. How many of the old girls do you suppose will be back this fall? Bertha Peck won't, because her folks are going to Europe and she will travel with them for a year at least. She would have graduated next June, too. It seems too bad to lose this last year, doesn't it? Mercedes and Cassandra at least will have new room-mates. Isn't it exciting to think out beforehand what the new girls will look like—"

"And what their names will be, and then find them altogether different from your dreams," added Tabitha. "But I am awfully glad I don't have Cassandra for a room-mate, Carrie. I don't see how you got along with her as beautifully as you did. I am sure I should have shaken all her teeth out the first week, if I'd had to room with her. Chrystobel was bad enough until we got acquainted, but

Cassandra—" Words failed her, and she finished her sentence with a shrug of her shoulders so expressive that Carrie laughed aloud, and said soothingly,

"Never mind, Pussy Catt. By next year the new building ought to be finished, so the smaller girls will be in the other court, and we will have dear old Ivy Hall all to ourselves. Won't that be splendid?"

"Will you go back next fall?"

"Um-hm. Papa promised me for sure that I could. Then maybe you and I can have a room together. Chrystobel ought to be willing to give you up to me by that time if she has you two whole years, don't you think?"

"It would be too good to be true, Carrie. I never plan on having you to myself but something comes up to interfere. You went to Ivy Hall a whole year before I did, and then we had to pair off with other girls last year. This summer, when I wanted to spend the vacation with you, dad got hurt and you went away, and now, when I was positive we were both going back to Ivy Hall to-morrow, you say you're going East again. I believe we are hoodooed!"

"Oh, no, we're not! We will room together yet—you see! It's just:—

'Look bravely up into the sky,
And be content with knowing
That God wished for a buttercup
Just here, where you are growing.' "

"You have stolen my motto."

"No—just shared it, Puss. Papa says it is a pretty good one or it wouldn't have helped you so much."

"Did he say that?"

"Just this evening when I cried because I couldn't go back to Ivy Hall with you."

"Then I will surely try harder than ever. Tom said I was winning my Civil War splendidly, but I thought he was only trying to encourage me when I get so disgusted at failing. I've got a perfectly awful temper yet! Here we are, Carrie! And there is your father out looking for you. Good-night! I'll see you in the morning, so there's no need to say good-bye now."

With a last long hug the two girls parted, two doors slammed shut behind them, and night descended upon Silver Bow.

CHAPTER II

GOOD NEWS FOR GLORIANA

"'Do your best and leave the rest!
What's the use of worry?
Firm endeavor stands the test
More than haste and hurry.
Rich rewards will come to him
Who works on with smiling vim,'"

warbled a high, sweet, plaintive voice, as its owner, ragged, patched and tousled, carefully lowered herself out of the great fig tree where she was perched, picked up her crutches, adjusted her basket of ripe, luscious fruit, and hobbled rapidly down the path toward the little town of Manchester, nestling among the foothills of the snow-capped San Gabriel Mountains.

She was not a pretty child. Indeed, a casual observer would have called her decidedly homely, for her face was generously sprinkled with freckles, her nose was inclined to be a pug, her mouth was too large and straight, and her abundant red hair was drawn

tightly back from a low forehead, and hung in a long, untidy braid down her back, accentuating the plainness and irregularity of her features. Yet it was a strong face in spite of its faults, and her large, questioning gray eyes were really lovely; but of this one beauty point the child was unaware.

Left an orphan before she was seven years old, she had been shifted from one unwilling neighbor to another until old Granny Conover had taken pity on the lonely, unhappy, homeless little waif and opened her door to the crippled child, who was doubly unwelcome to the Manchester wives because of her deformity. Granny Conover was the widow of an old soldier, and aside from the pitifully small pension she received from the government each month, her income depended solely upon the quantity of vegetables and fruit she could sell from her tiny garden; so the adoption of another member into the little family, which, besides the withered, stoop-shouldered, kindly old mistress, consisted of Tipsy, the earless cat, Kinks, the three-legged dog, and Bunter, a nanny goat of ancient lineage, meant still closer planning and scrimping, and it was

already a serious problem with the brave old soul how to make both ends meet.

But Gloriana Holliday, the red-haired cripple girl, had known only sharp, grudging words for so long that she was quick to appreciate genuine good-fellowship and to value the self-sacrifice of this old grandmother, whose meager fortune was scarcely enough to keep one body from want. And though handicapped by her deformity, she threw herself body and soul into the task of helping this good saint provide for her family of castaways, with such success that Granny Conover hardly missed from her little hoard the mite it took to feed and clothe the newcomer.

During the long summer days she picked berries for neighboring ranchers, peddled vegetables from Granny's garden, scoured the surrounding country for a certain wild plum which the housewives liked for jelly, gathered and sold the fruit from their own little orchard, which consisted of three immense fig, one pomegranate and five peach trees, and helped the more kindly disposed women with their preserving, for her fingers were long and nimble, and she had learned to do her tasks

with surprising accuracy and swiftness for one so young.

In the winter, when the heavy rains and chill winds from the mountains made all these things impossible, it was harder to gather up the pennies, especially as the best part of the day must be spent in the schoolroom. But she did her best, and had the keen satisfaction of knowing that she was at least not an added burden to the old dame who had given her the first home she had ever known since her parents had left her an orphan at the mercy of the cold, busy world.

Naturally a quiet, reserved, shy little maid, she lived much in a world of her own, for the neighborhood children were brought up to regard her as a pauper, and they never lost an opportunity to make her feel their disdain. Then, too, Granny Conover was considered "queer," and strange stories circulated by busybody gossips found root in many superstitious minds; so little by little, the odd couple on the hill were exiled from village society.

But if the fairies had denied Gloriana beauty, they had given her the voice of a bird,

as well as a decided talent for drawing, and she early formed the habit of comforting herself by these gifts when the harsh words and jeering taunts of her thoughtless mates made her heart ache with misery and despair. In school she was quick to learn, and took secret satisfaction in going ahead of the other scholars, though the fact that she ranked first in all her studies did not win her any more friends, but only served to make the pupils of Manchester school more hateful in their treatment of the ragged orphan maid.

All these thoughts were passing through the crippled girl's mind as she hobbled down the brown, dry hillside with the basket of figs she was to deliver to Mrs. Cates, the postmaster's wife; and she was wistfully wishing, as she had wished a thousand times before, that she had the flower-like face and beautiful curls of Marie Cates, or the tall, lithe figure of Genevieve Reynolds, or the pretty clothes of Phyllis Moore, the mayor's daughter.

"Perhaps if I had *one* of them, folks wouldn't hate me so," she sighed. "I know I am ugly—homely, but maybe if I had some nice new dresses like Phyllis, I'd look different

and folks wouldn't mind my being lame. Maybe they'd invite me to their parties and be sorry if I couldn't go to their picnics. Maybe they'd feel glad that I always stand first in my classes and not say I am a stuck-up prig of a pauper. I wonder why some folks are liked and others are made fun of all the time."

Suddenly the words of Granny Conover's favorite sermonette came lilting through her brain again, and once more she began warbling the refrain:

"'Do your best and leave the rest!
What's the use of worry?'"

"No use," jeered a voice at her elbow, and the impish face of one of her tormentors was thrust over her shoulder as the boy jerked maliciously at the basket she carried and asked insinuatingly, "What will you give me for something I've got?"

"Nothing," she answered shortly, remembering certain mean tricks he was in the habit of playing not only on herself but on all the more timid girls.

"But I've got something for you."

"Yes, you have! Do you expect me to be-

lieve that? I know you! I don't care for your old horned toads or water snakes, thank you. And you can keep all your slimy snails and green frogs and horrid spiders; or if you've got a bunch of cactus thorns in your hand, just punch yourself. 'Twill do you good! Go along and mind your own business; I'm not molesting you."

"All right, old girl, but maybe you'll sing another tune when I keep it myself. Mrs. Cates asked me to deliver it at Granny Conover's, but it's addressed to you and if you don't want it, I s'pose there is nothing to do but keep it myself."

He fished an envelope, much the worse for having come in contact with his grimy hands, out of his pocket; and held it tantalizingly before Gloriana's eyes, just long enough for her to see that it was really addressed to her, then stuffed it back into his coat and grinned derisively, triumphantly, at the enraged face of the girl.

"What business did Mrs. Cates have in giving you my letter?" she exploded at last. "She knew I would be down to her house this very afternoon, and could have got it myself.

Give me that envelope, Charlie Watts, this minute!"

"Couldn't think of it, Glorious Holliday," he answered with an aggravating swagger which made the angry Gloriana long to rap him over the head with one of her crutches. "Not for less'n a dozen of the biggest, ripest figs you've got there in your basket. Is it a go?"

"No, it ain't!" she declared with heat. "That letter is mine and you've no right keeping it."

"Twelve figs or no letter."

"No figs *and* one letter!"

"That's about the size of it if you don't fork over the figs," he replied impudently, "only—I keep the letter."

"I'll report you to Mrs. Cates."

"Go ahead. She went to Los Angeles about fifteen minutes ago and won't be back for a week."

"I'll tell the postmaster himself!"

"Huh! He'll believe a lot *you* say, you turnip-nose, carrot-head—"

His sentence was never finished, for with an inarticulate gasp of rage, Gloriana swung one

crutch high over her head and swept him off his feet before he could divine her intention. But the effort was too much for her strength, and losing her balance, she, too, fell to the ground, just as her surprised and enraged victim was struggling to his feet, with fire in his eye. Forgetting her crippled condition and the fact that he was much the stronger, he grappled with her, and the two rolled over and over on the brown hillside, upsetting the basket of figs and crushing the soft fruit in the dirt, while arms and legs thrashed wildly in the air.

Gloriana was soon winded, but in the struggle she had managed somehow to snatch the precious letter, now crumpled and torn almost beyond recognition, and tucked it down the neck of her frock without his seeing it. After that he could have pummeled the life out of her and she would never have made a sound. Fortunately for her, he soon wearied of the uneven battle, ashamed, perhaps, that he had tackled a girl and she a cripple. At any rate, he desisted, and with a last resounding slap across the freckled face half smothered in the dust, he rose to his feet, kicked the empty

basket further down the hill, and strode off toward town after one parting taunt.

"You'll hit me again, will you, smarty? It doesn't pay to monkey with yours truly. Next time perhaps you will give me a dozen figs when I ask for them and then you won't be out a whole basketful as well as your precious letter. Better hike for the post-office and tattle now, you Irish red-head, for you will never see that letter again."

"Don't be too sure of that, you figless bully," muttered the bloody Gloriana under her breath, as she slowly struggled to her feet, wiped her bleeding nose and surveyed the hopeless wreck of her basket of fruit. "I only wish I had hit you twice as hard. Oh, dear, not a single fig left fit to eat, and that was sixty cents' worth! If I were a boy he never would dare to tackle me. Sixty cents gone at one smash! What *will* Granny think? I s'pose he is tickled to death at the good job he did." And dropping down on the brown stubble once more, she sobbed despairingly, forgetting all about her bruised head and tingling hands in the thought of the sixty cents lost because she had refused to be bullied.

"Was there ever another little girl as homely and unhappy as I am?" she asked herself over and over again. "Was there ever one tormented and made fun of like I am? Oh, if I could just go away somewhere where folks didn't know me and think me a nuisance! I 'most wish the Manchester aldermen had sent me to an orphan asylum like they were going to do when Granny Conover took me in. Then maybe I'd have been adopted by this time—or perhaps it is only *pretty* children that people want to adopt. Why did I have to be so homely?"

She drew one ragged sleeve across her flushed face to wipe away the scalding tears, and as her arm fell back upon her knees, it brushed against a crumpled wad of paper in the front of her blouse. Mechanically she raised her hand to investigate, then suddenly remembered the torn, soiled letter which had been the cause of all this trouble, and with a mingled feeling of indifference and curiosity, she stripped open the battered envelope, drew forth a wrinkled sheet of paper covered with a delicate tracery of beautiful handwriting, and read, or tried to read the clear, direct, concise

sentences penned to her. But at first her tear-blurred eyes could not see the words distinctly, then the wonder of it held her breathless and unbelieving.

It could not mean her! She had given up all hope of such good fortune ever since the teacher had gently broken the disappointing news to her that someone in another town had won first place in the scholarship contest which entitled the successful student to a year in Ivy Hall, that famous school for girls. To be sure, she ranked second in the contest, but what good did that do? There was no second prize, and she could not conceive of such a possibility that the winner of the first place would give up such a glorious opportunity.

Slowly she re-read the letter in her hand. Yes, that is just what the principal said had happened. Was she really awake, or was this another tantalizing dream which would vanish in a few moments when she had roused from her stupefaction? The paper crackled between her fingers—it was sure-enough paper. She looked around her once more. There lay her crutches at her feet, the empty basket still remained on its side half-way down the hill

and the mess of crushed figs close at hand gave forth their sweet, familiar odor. No, there was no mistaking her surroundings or the events of the day. She was really awake, and the letter in her hand was really hers. A look of glorified triumph broke slowly over her face. With solemn elation swelling her heart, she gathered up her crutches, rescued her battered basket, and after one last inspection of the spoiled fruit in the gravel, she hopped nimbly away toward the little unpainted shack half a mile further up the path, eager to share her good news with the bent, wizened little Granny who had done so much for her.

Mrs. Conover was busy paring apples for her famous apple-butter which was greatly in demand among the Manchester inhabitants, but she heard the familiar tap of Gloriana's crutches far down the hard road, and from the quick, uneven steps readily guessed that something out of the ordinary had happened. But she was wholly unprepared for the transfiguration of the plain, freckled face which appeared the next instant in the doorway, and the subdued yet exultant note in the eager voice fairly electrified her.

"Granny! It's from Ivy Hall! I've got the scholarship after all!" She waved the tattered letter triumphantly over her head.

But Mrs. Conover did not understand. She thought the girl had taken leave of her senses, and dropping her pan of apples, she stared apprehensively at the dishevelled figure on the threshold, as she quavered, "Why, Glory, what ails you? Have you stayed so long in the hot sun that you've got a stroke?"

"No, Granny, I'm perfectly all right—and *so* happy! Just look at this letter. It's from Miss Pomeroy, principal of Ivy Hall. You know I tried for a scholarship in that school last June, but a Pomona girl won. I—I didn't want you to know how much I cared about it, Granny, but it nearly broke my heart when Miss Angus told me I was only second in the contest, and so could not go to Ivy Hall."

"But—how—why—what—" stammered the puzzled old soul, for Gloriana's explanation only served to mystify her the more. "I don't see how you hev got the scholarship then."

"The Pomona girl can't go, and so the prize comes to me. Isn't that the loveliest thing

that could happen to a girl? I wish Miss Angus were here now so I could tell her. *She'd* be glad, I know."

"It takes a heap of money to go to one of them fashionable boarding-schools, don't it?" ventured Mrs. Conover, still not comprehending the full meaning of Gloriana's good fortune, and much concerned for fear of further disappointment for the ambitious girl.

"The scholarship covers all tuition fees and the cost of books and—and everything."

"Clothes, too?"

Gloriana's face fell. A cold hand clutched at her heart. "Oh, Granny! I never thought of that." Without another word she turned and fled from the house as fast as her crutches would carry her, overwhelmed with grief and despair.

For some minutes after she had disappeared in the direction of the canyon—her favorite retreat in time of trouble—Mrs. Conover sat idly bent over her pan of apples, following in thought the flight of the disappointed girl, and musing sadly over the misfortunes and unhappiness which seem to claim some of God's children for their own.

"Poor Glory's never had a fair chance," she sighed. "And now her chance has come, she can't take it. Seems's if that's so often the way. Now if that was Marie Cates, why, she'd be able to get up and go in a minute!"

Her sharp eyes spied the discarded letter on the door-sill, where it had fallen unheeded when its owner had stumbled blindly down the steps, too miserable to think of anything but her own unfortunate lot. Mechanically the old woman picked it up and smoothed out the crumpled sheet, intending to lay it away for safe-keeping against the time when Gloriana should ask for it, but the delicate handwriting caught her attention, and without realizing what she was doing, she read the sentences which had so amazed and thrilled the crippled girl an hour before.

"My sakes!" she breathed, as the paper fluttered from her nerveless hands to the snow-white kitchen table. "How elegant it's written, and what a sweet way she has of saying things! She is sure a gentlewoman. I don't wonder Glory's crazy to go. She *must* go! This ain't the place for her with all the children hectorin' her day in and day out because

she's a homeless waif and lives with crazy old Granny Conover. She ain't very pert lookin', but she's as smart as the smartest, and dressed up a bit she'd stand in with the best of 'em."

A strange thought seized her, and shuffling across the room to a tiny closet, she dragged forth an ancient, hair-covered trunk, studded with round-headed, brass nails, and from the depths of it sorted out a heap of yellowed linen, sweet with the scent of "Old Man" and lavender, and an old-fashioned black bombazine, which had already seen many years' wear, but was still whole and clean. These garments she examined carefully one by one, then sighed with great relief:

"The underclothes will just about fit her as they be, but I calculate this dress is a bit too big as well as some out of date. It had better be that way than too small, I reckon. If she can make use of them she might as well hev them now. They'll never be put to a better purpose."

She hunted out a huge pair of shears, and with ruthless fingers ripped up the black gown, while she waited eagerly, impatiently for the

return of Gloriana. It was sunset before the girl appeared, more silent and subdued than usual, but with no trace of tears on her face. She had gotten beyond the point of tears—she was simply dumb with despair. Yet in spite of her heavy grief, she was surprised at the sight which met her eyes when she entered the hot little kitchen and found Granny Conover busily snipping away at the black bombazine, with ravellings and bits of thread scattered all about the scoured floor, while a heap of time-stained linen boiled merrily on the cracked stove, and emitted a moist, sickening fragrance which filled the house and stole out through the open door and windows.

"Why, what are you doing, Granny?" she asked in genuine surprise, seeing one of her own worn-out ginghams stretched carefully upon the widths of the black material.

"Makin' you a wa'drobe so's you can shine at Ivy Hall."

"But—but where *did* you get the stuff, and isn't that black rather old for me?"

"Yes, 'tis ruther old, I'll admit. I had it when I was a gal, and my lass Lucy wore it

when she was about your age, but it's still whole and strong."

"I didn't mean that, Granny," stammered Gloriana, perceiving that the kindly old soul had misinterpreted her words. "But girls don't wear black now, do they? Not unless someone is dead, I mean."

"Well, ain't your mother and father dead, honey? Besides, it's the only thing I've got left that's fit to make over, and I reckoned you would ruther wear black and go to Ivy Hall than not have the black and have to stay to home—here in Manchester."

A faint, worried look had crept into the dim old eyes, and in a spasm of contrition Gloriana cried, "Of course I'd rather, Granny! It's awfully good of you to try to make me a wardrobe, but—school begins next Tuesday."

"Well, this is only Thursday, ain't it?"

"Yes."

"Then I reckon there's time enough if we both work hard."

"We have no sewing machine."

"Hands wuz made before sewing machines. There's plenty of needles in the house, and a whole spool of black thread. I never had a

machine for my sewing till ten years after I wuz married, but I made stacks of clo'es in that while, all by hand, every stitch."

Hope began to throb once more in Gloriana's heart, but there was still another obstacle to be overcome. "How—how will I get there? Los Angeles is twenty miles away."

"I've thought that all out, too," answered Mrs. Conover promptly. "There won't be any more bills to meet for a couple of weeks or so, and by that time my pension will be coming in. So you can keep the sixty cents Mrs. Cates give you for the figs. That will get you a ticket to the city and leave you a few cents for spendin' money. See!—you're all fixed out, and nothin' to hender your going to the big bugs' boarding-school for once." The old lady chuckled gleefully as she slashed away at the skimpy sleeves. "You better answer that principal's letter to oncet like she says, so's to let her know you're coming."

Gloriana opened her mouth to explain about the sixty cents, then shut it, knowing how bitterly angry against the rich town people Mrs. Conover would be if she knew the whole

story about the letter; and with a wildly pulsing heart she began preparations for their frugal evening meal, leaving the woman to finish cutting out the new dress before darkness should prevent further work on the garment.

Unconsciously, as she flew about her work, the old, familiar words came dancing their spritely music through her brain:

> " 'Do your best and leave the rest!
> What's the use of worry?' "

"Some way is sure to turn up," she comforted herself. "And if it doesn't, then I can walk. I've got two feet, even if I do have to use crutches."

So with optimistic spirit she wrote a stiff little letter to the principal of Ivy Hall, saying that she would be there on Tuesday morning ready to begin her studies with the rest of the pupils; and then lent her heart and hands to the creating of a respectable dress to wear when she should make her appearance among the wealthier scholars of the boarding-school.

It was finished in time, much to the little

girl's relief, and though very straight and plain, she thought it a grand creation, and donned it with a feeling of pride and joy. "I wish the looking-glass was big enough so I could see my whole self," she sighed, twisting and turning almost wrong side out in her efforts to get a glimpse of the precious gown in the tiny, dingy mirror. But perhaps it was fortunate for her peace of mind that her wish remained unsatisfied, for Granny Conover had never been famous as a dressmaker, and had Gloriana seen the long, uneven, draggy-tailed skirt which fitted much like a bag on a bean-pole, it is very doubtful whether she would have had the courage to make the short journey to the near-by city and Ivy Hall.

As it was, she gathered together her scanty possessions with a light heart, and when the first glow of sunrise tinged the eastern skies, she set out on her long tramp, for no method of securing the necessary car-fare had presented itself to her mind, and she could not bring herself to disclose the true facts of the case to Mrs. Conover. However, the dawning day was delightfuly cool and fresh, the road was smooth, and bright thoughts of the

happy days to follow made the way seem short to the brave-hearted cripple.

The first hour she had the whole world to herself, and exulted that this was so, but as the sun crept higher in the sky teams began to pass her, and occasionally an automobile whizzed by. But if the drivers noticed her at all, it was just to fling some teasing jest at her, and she was too shy and sensitive to ask for a lift. So she toiled manfully on her way, tired and perspiring, but buoyed up by the thought of the reward at the end of the journey.

CHAPTER III

BACK AT IVY HALL

Ivy Hall was alive once more, after a long, silent summer. Teachers bustled from class-room to class-room, and students flitted from hall to hall, schedules were arranged, lessons assigned, the daily routine of work announced, and classes dismissed for the day. Many of the girls had arrived two and three days previous to this opening day of school, but the morning trains had brought several belated students, and these, together with certain new pupils, were making their presence known to their mates scattered in groups about the wide lawns and through the gardens.

In the center of the largest group stood a tall, slender, black-eyed girl, with radiant face and glowing heart, smiling happily at all around her and chattering like a magpie at every opportunity, for it was beyond her wildest dreams to be welcomed so royally, with such enthusiastic hugs and genuine expres-

sions of joy by all the former girls upon her return to school after the long, hard vacation. She had little realized her own great popularity until she stood among the dear, familiar surroundings again, heard the glad voices of her mates shouting their greetings, and saw the look of sincere pleasure in the faces of teachers and principal. But the knowledge that one and all of her associates loved her did not turn her head. It merely strengthened her resolve to deserve their friendship and to do her best in whatever task came her way. So she laughed and chatted with the rest, renewing old acquaintanceships, and—remembering her own forlorn state when she had first entered the doors of Ivy Hall—trying to make the new pupils feel at ease in their unfamiliar surroundings.

"It seems so queer not to have Bertha and Carrie with us this year," she sighed regretfully, when Grace Tilton had finished naming over the former pupils who had already returned to take up their studies in the old, ivy-hung buildings.

"Vera Foss and Madeline Gray haven't come yet, either," said the ever-present Cas-

sandra, who was feeling much elated because she had no room-mate this year.

"But they are both registered for this semester—I asked Miss Pomeroy," spoke up Chrystobel, who had been watching with interest a huge brown automobile which was swiftly approaching the big gates; "and here they are!"

With a shout of welcome, the whole group rushed pell-mell down the path, grabbed the giggling duet and fairly dragged them out of the machine, all talking and laughing at once.

"So Carrie isn't coming back this year? Oh, dear! What will you do without her, Kitty?" Tabitha was still "Kitty" to all the girls.

"I don't see why you should ask Tabitha such a question," said Cassandra in aggrieved tones. "Carrie was *my* room-mate. Tabitha's got Chrystobel and I have nobody!"

Roguish Vera glanced down at the pouting face of the spoiled child, but knowing Cassandra of old, she could read her thoughts like a book, so she teasingly sympathized, "Now, isn't that too bad! Why don't you go in with Mercedes McKittrick? She is here again, isn't she? Yes, I see her sitting on the steps

with someone I don't recognize. She has no room-mate, either, has she? Bertha Peck is in Europe. Take Mercedes for your partner. She's a lovely—"

"I don't want her—I mean, she doesn't want me," interrupted Cassandra, with the uncomfortable feeling that she was being laughed at, though not one of her companions wore the faintest suspicion of a smile. "Anyway, that girl she is with is her room-mate. She has a new one—Mildred Shepherd, from Pasadena. And besides, if I can't have Carrie, I don't know as I want anyone."

"Then what are you kicking about? I'd offer you my room-mate if she hadn't graduated last June. Madeline and I are going to be chums this year, provided we can work Miss Pomeroy. Do you s'pose we can?"

"I don't know; there are a lot of new girls this term," answered Grace mischievously. "I heard the new Spanish teacher talking to the principal, and she told her that all the rooms were full now but Cassandra's. Perhaps there is no place for you at all."

Vera laughed derisively, and clutching Madeline by the sleeve, she exclaimed, "Come

on, Maddy, we must make our bow before the lady of the house and get assigned. I wonder if she *will* stick us in with new girls."

The two vanished within doors, and the rest of the group strolled back to their seat under a great pepper tree. They were hardly settled comfortably once more when Cassandra's disdainful voice piped up, "Well, will you look at that scarecrow coming through the gate! What do you s'pose she wants here?"

The girls all turned and stared, for the dusty, crimson-faced, oddly-attired figure hobbling wearily up the shady walk did look more like a scarecrow from the cornfield than any human being.

"I expect that's your new room-mate, Cassie," jeered Jessie Wayne. "Don't you wish now that you had taken Mercedes?"

"She must have made that dress herself," said Julia, who had taken careful inventory of the limping figure, and was now grotesquely sketching it on the cover of her French grammar.

"Ho! I could do better than that myself," declared Cassandra boastfully. "She prob'ly picked it out of some rag-bag."

"Well, you better go tell her that beggars aren't allowed on the streets of Los Angeles, Cas," suggested Grace.

"There's a cop on the next avenue. If he sees her, he will run her in," added Chrystobel.

"She's got hair to match Miss White's, hasn't she?" chuckled Hattie Horner, who was always in trouble with that teacher and never missed an opportunity of making fun of her. "And look at the freckles on her face! You can see 'em a block away. Wish I had a dollar for every one. I'd be rich."

"Shame on you, Hattie! I bet she heard —she looked this way."

"Well, what business has she here then?"

"Let's go up to the house and see what she wants," Julia suddenly suggested.

Tabitha alone remained silent, and as the girls scrambled to their feet to follow their leader, she kept her seat on the grass and merely shook her head when pressed a second time to accompany them.

"What's the matter? Homesick?" asked Chrystobel anxiously.

"No," she smiled. "Lazy, I guess. I must

write to Carrie. I promised to let her know at once what we did the first morning. She is so eager to keep track of all our doings."

"Then we will find you here when we come back?"

"Yes."

So they left her, but she did not write. She was too busy with her thoughts, and the picture of the shabby little cripple with her appealing gray eyes kept bobbing up before her in a most disquieting fashion.

"Oh, dear," she sighed, "what a horrible habit I have fallen into of thinking of such sights. Of course I am sorry for the poor thing, but I can't help her any and there is no use of worrying about it. I ought to have said something when the girls were poking fun at her, though. She can't help being a cripple and having red hair, any more than I could help having such a name and being so skinny when I was smaller. If she really is a beggar I might have given her some money. Dad sent me such a lot—"

"Tabitha Catt! What do you think?"

Grace, Julia and Jessie, with a dozen more comrades trailing behind, rushed excitedly up

to the unconscious girl in the grass, startling her so that she broke the back of her Latin dictionary.

"That you have nearly scared the life out of me," she managed to gasp; then cried in alarm, "Why, what is the matter? Has anything dreadful happened?" for the faces clustered about her were comically tragic.

"The worst yet," burst out Hattie, who was inclined to be something of a snob. "That horrible hunch-back who just came up the walk is to be a *pupil* at Ivy Hall!"

"She wasn't a hunch-back," contradicted Tabitha, feeling somehow strangely relieved at this piece of disconcerting news.

"She is a cripple and that is as bad. What *do* you suppose Miss Pomeroy is thinking of? If my mother knew such a creature was thrust in upon us in that fashion, she wouldn't leave me here another day."

"Perhaps you had better write her, then," suggested Tabitha sarcastically, much exasperated at Hattie's supercilious tones. "You talk as if the girl had smallpox."

"Did you know she was coming?" demanded Chrystobel suspiciously.

"Never saw her before in my life, but I knew there was a scholarship girl coming."

"A scholarship girl?" repeated one of the new pupils, who was not yet familiar with the rules of the school.

"Yes. Each year after this there is to be a scholarship contest in the counties of Southern California, and the girl who passes the examinations best is to have a year's tuition at Ivy Hall. Last year was the first time the plan was ever tried. Someone left some money to the school to be used for this very purpose, and a Pomona girl won first place. Just at the last minute something happened so she couldn't come, and of course the second highest contestant was given the chance. I suppose—"

"This is her!" cried Julia with a tragic uplifting of eyes and an utter disregard of grammar. Then she began to giggle hysterically. "The funniest part of it all is, that Cassandra's room is the only one that's not full. What do you suppose my little lady will say to her new partner?"

"We've no business to make fun of her," cried Tabitha sharply.

"Now don't be a goody-goody, Pussy Catt," purred Grace, smoothing the long silky black braids much as she would have smoothed the fur of a real cat.

"I'm not a goody-goody," Tabitha denied with vigor, "but I haven't forgotten the time I stood in her shoes."

"Oh, Kitty! As if you ever looked like that!"

"I didn't say I *looked* like her. I should *hope* I *didn't* but I reckon I have felt like her."

Tabitha little realized how truly she had spoken, for how could she know what agonies the sensitive cripple had endured because of her deformity and ugly face, but she did know what it meant to be pestered because of one's name; and, recognizing the unattractiveness of this newest pupil, she extended her ready sympathy even before it was asked.

"I'll bet Cassandra will make life unbearable for her. Maybe she won't stay long," whispered Hattie under her breath, considerably surprised at Tabitha's attitude, and piqued at the rebuke she had received.

"I don't believe Miss Pomeroy will *let* her

stay when she sees what a beggarly-looking thing she is," returned Chrystobel, who still clung to some of her haughty ways, despite the friendship existing between her and Tabitha.

"I don't know about that," said Grace doubtfully, having overheard both remarks. "Miss Pomeroy is awfully careful about finding out the history of all the girls she takes in as scholars here, and I think if this one is all right—only poor—she will let her stay the year out. That scholarship money was meant to help girls who can't afford to come any other way. Miss Pomeroy doesn't care how poor a person is if she is nice. Look at Tabitha—she wasn't rich last year."

"No, but her father owned several mines just the same, even if they hadn't begun to pay, while this girl—why, she is a—a pauper! All the clothes she has to her name she brought in that little bundle hitched to one crutch. And she *walked,* yes, actually *walked* to town because she had no money to buy a ticket on the cars." Chrystobel's voice rose from a cautious whisper to audible tones in her excitement, and Tabitha caught the last words.

"Did you say that crippled girl *walked* to the city?" she asked abruptly.

"That is what she told Miss Pomeroy. That is, she walked from Manchester as far as El Molino, where someone gave her a lift in an auto over to the Huntington Building, and she walked the rest of the way."

"What is her name?"

"I couldn't quite catch. Glory-on-us, or something like that, Holliday."

A deeper pity for the unfortunate waif surged through Tabitha's heart. Perhaps this girl's name had caused her tears also. They must try to make her happy at Ivy Hall.

"Well," she said thoughtfully, but with considerable warmth, "*I* think she deserves a better welcome than being picked to pieces and made fun of before we know what kind of a girl she is."

"You seem to be interested," said Hattie maliciously. "Perhaps *you* would be willing to take her as *your* room-mate. I'd rather have Chrystobel, and that new girl, Gwynne Ralston, who is in with me now, could double up with Cassandra. Cassie is willing to take

anyone she can get rather than have that red-headed picture for a room-mate."

Tabitha's face flushed crimson, and with an angry sweep of her arm she snatched up her books and stalked off toward the Hall, not daring to trust herself to speak another word, but she could not fail to hear Hattie's last hateful fling, "Tabitha has grown too conceited for any living use, but I will show her that her say-so doesn't carry with me."

Hot tears filled the black eyes, and with an angry sob in her throat, she hurried up the walk into the cool shadows of the wide corridor. But before she had reached the shining staircase leading up to her room, the door of Miss Pomeroy's office opened abruptly, and the principal appeared hastily on the threshold with a slip of paper in her hand and a deep frown of bewilderment on her usually serene brow. At sight of Tabitha, her face cleared, and beckoning to the black-eyed girl, she said in tones of great relief:

"Tabitha, I want you to meet the newest member of our big family, Gloriana Holliday. She has the honor of being the first scholarship girl Ivy Hall has ever boasted. I know

you will do your best to make her feel at home among us. Will you take her now to Madame Du Bois, who will show her to her room? I have an important appointment to meet this very minute."

Tabitha managed to choke down her own grief long enough to bow stiffly to the frightened, trembling cripple, and to murmur some unintelligible words of greeting, as she mechanically extended her cold hand for the slip of paper on which Miss Pomeroy had written instructions for the little French teacher. Then, without so much as a glance over her shoulder to see if the newcomer followed, she hurried up the polished stairs and down the length of the hall to the cozy room where she had spent so many happy hours in the companionship of the lovable, loyal, little French woman.

The door flew open almost before she had ceased knocking, and the dark, oval face, framed in its dusky curls, beamed out upon her, as its owner cried with girlish eagerness, "Eet iss Tabissa, an' you haf come to call!"

"No, Madame," answered the girl from Silver Bow almost rudely. "I must not stop

this time. Here is a note from Miss Pomeroy, and—this is Gloriana Holliday, the newest member of our big family. She has the honor of being the first scholarship pupil Ivy Hall has ever boasted. I know you will do your best to make her feel at home among us. Will you kindly show her to her room? I have an important appointment to meet—"

She broke off suddenly with a horrible suspicion in her mind that she had been repeating aloud the principal's very words. Her eyes wavered and fell before the amazed, bewildered expression on Madame's gentle face, and the hurt, wounded shrinking in the wide gray eyes of the new pupil. Turning hastily away from the odd figure in the doorway, she fled down the long corridor to her own room, turned the key in the lock, and threw herself in bitter humiliation upon the narrow bed by the window to sob out her grief undisturbed.

CHAPTER IV

UNHAPPY DAYS

Those were unhappy days which followed the advent of Gloriana Holliday at Ivy Hall. Unhappy not only for poor, shy, scared little Gloriana herself, but also for her rebellious room-mate, Cassandra, and particularly unhappy for Tabitha Catt, whose troubled conscience told her that she had been weighed in the balance and found wanting. Such thoughts she had at first tried to dismiss from her mind by diligent application to her books, but her feverish study brought poor results. She could not remember what she had mechanically learned, and the usually retentive memory played her false at every turn. Books palled, lessons lost their interest, and her teachers sat amazed at the change which had taken place in this favorite pupil, who had won such respect and love from every heart the year previous.

"I can't understand it," complained exact-

ing Miss Summers, as she crumpled a particularly carelessly done geometry paper in her hand and frowned at the group of teachers gathered around her desk for a confidential talk about their work.

"It isn't at all like her," added Miss Cornwall, recalling the low mark she had been forced to place opposite Tabitha's name for that morning's recitation.

"But she doesn't seem to care," blazed out Miss White, who had been sorely disappointed over the weekly portfolio of drawings just turned in by her star pupil. "When I called her attention to her poor work this afternoon, she merely shrugged her shoulders and suggested that it was as good as the average drawings of the other girls."

"Ze summer," began the loyal French teacher, with a deprecating gesture of her expressive hands, "ze summer, it has been *verry* hard for mademoiselle. Maybe she is too—too weary to exert herself yet."

"She was the essence of enthusiasm when she came back from her vacation," Miss White persisted. "And she passed her examinations on the work she missed last spring with

scarcely a mistake. I thought she would accomplish wonders this year, but here it is not the end of the first month and she has simply —slumped."

"So iss ze ozers," championed Madame with gentle insistence. "Zis morning no one recites perfectly—not good, even. Eet iss ze weazer."

"It is not unusually warm for this season of the year," sighed puzzled Miss Summers, smoothing out the crumpled paper and trying once more to follow Tabitha's impossible method of proving her theorems. "In fact, I thought it was delightfully cool after our hot August. No, it can't be the heat, and yet it is as you say, Tabitha is not the only one who is falling down in her work. That scholarship pupil has proved to be a stupid ninny. I don't see how she ever won second place in the contest last summer."

"Zey just haf not become settled to study yet."

"But they ought to be by this time. Three weeks gone already and nothing accomplished! I don't understand it!"

"I think I do."

Miss Pomeroy, sitting idly by the open window watching the girls in the gardens below, had been a silent member of the little conference up to this point, and the sound of her quiet, almost colorless tones startled her staff of workers, who had forgotten the presence of their superior officer in their animated discussion of the day's failures.

"What iss it you sink?" ventured the French lady, as the sudden silence of the room grew oppressive.

"I should like a little more time for investigation before voicing my opinions," she smiled; and her assistants saw that the bewildered expression which had supplanted the usual serenity of that noble face on the first day of school had lifted, and she was evidently in command of the situation once more.

So the little conference ended, and with more hopeful hearts the several instructors separated to attend to other duties, trusting that the solution of their perplexing problem was near at hand.

Then the unexpected happened. There came a telegram in the night. Miss Pomeroy's dear old mother was dying, so it said,

and the principal must go east at once. There were hasty preparations, hasty instructions for both teachers and pupils, a hasty departure at daybreak, and Ivy Hall was left in charge of Miss Jeremy, a capable, but somewhat absent-minded old soul who taught English, and had been the confidential adviser of Ivy Hall's chief ever since the organization of that institution.

This was unfortunate, however, for, though she had made an admirable adviser and a splendid instructor, she was no general; and the unexpected duties thrust upon her confused the good lady to the verge of distraction. She flew from one place to another like a frightened, fluttering bird, making a vain endeavor to mother too large a brood, and not aware what was the trouble. Pride forbade her asking assistance of her subordinates, and they forbore volunteering advice or opinions until such should be requested. So orderly Ivy Hall assumed a chaotic state unheard of before in its history.

The spoiled Cassandra, who had spent the first three weeks of the new term in sulking, suddenly became her pert, audacious self, and

life for her unhappy room-mate grew almost unbearable. At first the naughty child persecuted poor Gloriana in secret, hiding her books, misplacing her papers, breaking her pencils, rumpling up the nicely-made bed, scattering the scanty wardrobe about the room, mussing up the pitifully meager contents of the other girl's dresser drawers, and in every way seeking to bring down censure upon the head of her innocent victim. In this she was so successful that she became bolder in her mischief-making, secure in the knowledge that Gloriana would never dare to expose her; for the shy, heavy-hearted girl from the foothills stood in great awe of her mates, and seemed actually too frightened for words whenever anyone chanced to address her. This made it very easy to torment her, and as Cassandra was careful to be on her good behavior when any of the teachers was near, it was some time before her mean, tantalizing tricks were discovered, though it soon became evident to the kindly-hearted little French woman that something was wrong; and with sly cunning, she mentioned the matter to Tabitha one day.

They were sitting silent and preoccupied

on the wide window seat at the end of their corridor that warm afternoon, each apparently deep in study, but for more than an hour neither had turned a page in the books reposing on their knees. Both were so lost in their own thoughts that the pupils passing up and down the winding stairs never caused them to lift their eyes. To all appearances, they neither saw nor heard anything that went on around them, yet Madame was aware of every little incident which had transpired in the hall that afternoon, and when suddenly the door of Cassandra's room opened and shut quietly, and red-eyed Gloriana, in her one shabby gingham, glided hastily, noiselessly down the stairway, and out into the garden, the French woman said softly, as if musing aloud, "Mademoiselle Gloriana, she seem so sad. I fear Cassandra haf—what you call it?—incompatability of tempers wiz her. Poor child!"

The black head bending low over the Latin lexicon lifted instantly, and Tabitha, following the glance of Madame's sympathetic eyes, saw the dingy, damp figure limping hurriedly out of sight among the thick shrubbery of her own favorite nook in the garden.

"You mean Cassandra plagues her? Yes, perhaps she does. She is very cordial in her dislikes and no doubt lets Gloriana know that she hates her." Tabitha spoke stiffly and with little enthusiasm.

"Zen it must stop!" said Madame gently, and yet with such decision that Tabitha was startled. "It iss too bad for one to be so sad in a place so lovely. Zis school is meant for smiles and happy faces, and not for tears and sorrowful eyes."

Tabitha did not answer, but fell to pondering the teacher's words and trying to analyze her own restless unhappiness, while the wily Madame gathered up her belongings and slipped away to her room.

Before the girl had thoroughly digested the little sermon, however, there was a rush of feet on the stairs, and Grace, Chrystobel and Julia, followed by the entire school, with reluctant Gloriana bringing up the rear, poured into the corridor and scattered to their rooms, calling excitedly over their shoulders to Tabitha, "Come on, Kitty, get your cap and apron! Miss King says we may have a candy-pull to-day instead of our regular lesson

to-morrow. There is just time before tea. Hurry! Do!"

For an instant Tabitha was impelled with a desire to remain where she was, although her absence from class would mean another zero. Then—perhaps it was Madame's words still ringing in her ears—something urged her to join in this unexpected frolic, and collecting her books and papers, she hurried away with the rest of the eager girls for the domestic science room.

What a clatter sixty amateur cooks can create, and what a chatter sixty lively tongues can make! In less time than it takes to tell, the great kitchen was a seething mass of laughing, giggling girls, and bubbling, boiling pots of syrup. For the first time since the new school year had begun everyone at Ivy Hall seemed unrestrainedly happy. Even shy Gloriana forgot her wretched dress and crept out of her shell of reserve to take part in the lively conversation. To be sure, her partner in the taffy making chanced to be sweet, gay-hearted Grace Tilton, and Grace could win confidence from stones by her winsome ways, it was said. However that may be, Grace herself was sur-

prised at the result of her efforts, and more than surprised at the glimpse of lovely character revealed by the momentary lifting of the veil of silence in which the poor, forlorn, unwelcome orphan had taken refuge since her coming to Ivy Hall.

"Why, she's a darling if she is so homely and ragged!" whispered astonished Grace in Tabitha's ear at her first opportunity.

"Who?" demanded the black-eyed girl, though she knew without asking the question.

"Gloriana, of course! She has the simplest, quaintest way of saying things."

"Has she?" Tabitha's tones were dull and lifeless.

Grace hesitated, puzzled, then exclaimed fiercely, "What does possess everybody at Ivy Hall this year? Nothing has gone right since school began. It's horrid to live in such an atmosphere. I wish to goodness Carrie Carson had come back. *She* wouldn't be an iceberg, no matter what happened. *She* makes friends with everyone regardless of their looks or clothes!"

Before Tabitha could reply to this tirade, or even recover her breath from the blow,

there was a suppressed exclamation from the adjoining table, and Grace wheeled just in time to see Cassandra toss her long rope of soft, warm taffy toward Hattie Horner, miss the outstretched hands too far away ever to hope of catching it, and let it fall full upon the red head of hapless Gloriana bending over a kettle of seething molasses.

Tabitha saw the accident also, but she saw more than that. In Cassandra's eyes she saw the wicked gleam of triumph, as that maid, with pretended solicitude, sprang forward to free the heavy braids of her room-mate from their sticky covering.

"Now see what you have done!" gulped miserable Gloriana in dire dismay, trying to dig the soft candy loose with her fingers. "Just look at my hair,—and you have made me tear my dress, too!"

"You shouldn't have bobbed up just when you did!" cried Cassandra indignantly. "How was I to know you were going to get in my way? And you have spoiled all my taffy! What isn't in your hair is on the floor. Oh, it's too mean!"

She managed to squeeze a real tear or two

out of her eyes, and was the picture of abject woe when Miss King, attracted by the stir and sound of excited voices in that end of the room, came hurrying up to investigate the cause.

"Cassandra, what has happened?" she demanded, seeing only the puddle of ruined taffy in the middle of the floor, and Cassandra's grimy fist scratching the tears down her flushed cheeks.

"She spoiled all my candy, Gloriana did!" the petted darling declared vindictively. "Knocked it right out of my hands—"

"You lie! You miserable little jade!" Tabitha, with face white as wax and hands clenched in fury, glared down at the smaller girl with eyes that blazed with scorn and wrath.

A hush of apprehension stilled all sounds in the room, and the girls held their breath in affright. Mary Martin had been expelled from school for less than that.

"Tabitha Catt!" Miss King's voice was sharp with horror.

"She did it on purpose!" defended Tabitha, only then aware of what she had said. *"Cas-*

sandra did it on purpose. Look at Gloriana's hair!"

"I did not!" Cassandra denied in heat. "She bobbed up in my way just as I threw my end of the rope to Hattie—"

"You got in *her* way. She was sitting right where she is now. You *tried* to do it."

"I never did! Teacher, she knocked it out of my—"

"That's a—"

"Tabitha! Cassandra! That will do for both of you." Miss King suddenly found her tongue again. "Girls, return to your tables. Cassandra, clean up that candy on the floor. Gloriana, you may be excused to attend to your hair. Tabitha will finish pulling your taffy."

The girls scattered as quickly as they had gathered. Mutinous Cassandra sought out bucket and mop for her hateful task; Tabitha took charge of the deserted kettle where the over-done taffy was fast cooling; and Gloriana, with tear-dimmed eyes and a tumultuous heart, disappeared through the door, followed a few moments later by Grace Tilton. Neither had returned when the warning clang

of the gong summoned the girls from their various tasks.

Tabitha was quaking in her shoes, expecting at least a reprimand for her hasty words, and wondering what form of punishment might be visited upon her when the enormity of her sin had been reported to Miss Jeremy. But Miss King had suffered much at the hands of sulky, spoiled Cassandra, and her sympathies were so entirely with the red-haired maid, whose imploring eyes reminded her of a hunted deer, that she forbore to scold Tabitha, and dismissed her with the caution, "Don't ever let it occur again, my dear. Such language is absolutely inexcusable in a lady."

Astonished, humiliated, relieved, Tabitha hurried from the room, her quick eyes sweeping the throng of girls in search of Cassandra; but she, too, had vanished. Resolving to have it out with the culprit at the first opportunity, Tabitha ran lightly down the stairs and across the garden to the Main Building to make hurried preparations for the evening dinner hour.

As she passed the open windows of the basement laundry, her flying steps were arrested by the sound of mingled angry and distressed

voices, one pleading, one scolding, a third—yes, Cassandra's—raised in indignant protest.

"You're not Miss Jeremy, Grace Tilton, and 'tisn't for you to say what I shall do and what I shan't before I can have any dinner. You let me out of this room instantly, or I'll make you sorry for it. No, I won't touch her hair. I'd as soon wash snakes!"

"Please, Grace," pleaded a choked voice, scarcely recognizable as that belonging to the Manchester orphan girl. "Don't make her! I would rather cut it all off than have her lay her hands on it. Go on to the dining-room, both of you, or Miss Jeremy will give you demerits for tardiness."

"I will do no such thing!" declared a hard, stubborn voice, with all the gay music of its tones gone. "Cassandra is a contemptible coward, and if Miss King hasn't backbone enough to make her apologize before the class for her dirty work, *I'll* see that she apologizes to you by washing the candy out of your hair."

"I will *not,* I tell you!" screeched Cassandra in frenzy.

"You *will!*" yelled Grace, equally emphatic.

Then the smack of a wet slap, a subdued

cry of protest from Gloriana, and the sound of a scuffle from the room below lent wings to Tabitha's feet and she plunged unceremoniously into the midst of the struggling girls in the damp laundry, before they were aware that anyone was near.

Jerking the combatants roughly apart, she demanded sternly, "What does this mean?" in such exact imitation of Miss Pomeroy's tones that both girls fell back in alarm. Then, perceiving that one of their own number was the interferer, they sprang toward each other once more, only to find Tabitha still between them and to hear Tabitha's voice say commandingly, "Stop that racket this minute! Do you want Miss Jeremy to hear you? Go to your rooms, both of you. There's only five minutes before the dinner bell rings. *I* shall stay here with Glory."—She was unaware of the fact that she had spoken a pet name loved by Gloriana, because it had been her parents' name for their only child.—"Cassandra shan't touch that hair. She isn't fit!"

"I simply wanted to make her apologize to Gloriana," Grace explained, breathing hard,

and secretly vowing vengeance upon the lusty-lunged Cassandra.

"She will apologize yet," muttered Tabitha under her breath, as she pushed the two angry girls toward the door and turned her attention to the tangled, sticky mass of red hair dripping over a laundry tub where its owner was taking advantage of the lull to scrub her head vigorously. But her hair was unusually heavy, long and snarly, and she was making little progress with her task, so she offered no objections when Tabitha took the soap and sponge from her tired hands and proceeded with deft strokes to wash and dry the thick mane.

So quickly was it done that Gloriana was astonished into asking, "Why, is it dry so soon?"

"Very nearly. Perhaps a little damp yet, but it can be done up now if you like. You have lovely hair. Why don't you wear it looser around your face? It would—show off better." She had intended saying, "be more becoming," but caught the unlucky words before they slipped off her tongue, and stood

embarrassed, fingering the shining, glinting tresses with admiring hands.

"I have tried a good many times," answered Gloriana wistfully, "but I don't know how to keep it in place."

"Let *me* try. I'd love to."

"Really?" Gloriana was incredulous. Was this Tabitha Catt, the girl, who, through some mysterious power, seemed to hold at the same time the love and awe of the whole school?

"Really!"

"Then—you—may if you like."

Without another word, Tabitha gathered up the masses of red-gold hair, and soon had it puffed in soft waves about the wistful, freckled face, giving it a beauty that even Gloriana in her wildest flights of fancy had never dreamed of. Tabitha was herself startled at the transfiguration her hands had wrought, and when she beheld the result of her labor cried out in unfeigned admiration, "Why, Glory, you are handsome!"

A second time she had used the dear, familiar, pet name, but this time Gloriana did not notice it, for in turning away from the bit of cracked mirror they had found propped up in

one corner of the room, her glance had fallen upon the jagged tear in the front breadth of her skirt, and she suddenly remembered this other calamity which was even worse than the taffy in her hair.

Tabitha, wondering at the abrupt change of expression from glad animation to utter dejection, followed the glance of her companion and understood. For one breathless moment she was silent, then impulsively exclaimed, "Don't mind that, Gloriana! I am sorry it happened, of course, but I have a couple of dresses in my trunk which shrunk so much the first time they were washed that I can't wear them any longer. They would just about fit you, I reckon. Will you accept them?"

Gloriana's troubled gray eyes looked into the friendly black ones, idly wondered that she had ever thought Tabitha cold and heartless, and reading only sincerity in the dark face, she answered unhesitatingly, "Yes, I will accept them. You are very kind."

And together the two girls mounted the basement stairs, happier than when they had descended them an hour before.

CHAPTER V

THE FATE OF TABITHA'S DRESSES

Tabitha even hummed a snatch of song as she sauntered down the corridor toward her room, for the burden which had weighed so heavily upon her spirit all these weeks seemed suddenly to have vanished, and with eager eyes and a joyous heart she drank in the beauties of Ivy Hall which she had almost come to think had lost their charm for all time.

Pausing before the open hall window overlooking the garden, the girl let her gaze wander over each familiar flower and shrub dotting the dewy lawn as she revelled in their perfume and rejoiced that it was her privilege to share such loveliness. "It is like fairy-land," she half whispered, sniffing hungrily at the sweet night air, for already the gray of the autumn twilight had chased away the last lingering sunbeam and darkness was rapidly falling. "I have to pinch myself to be sure I am awake. I used to wish I could have been

Alice in Wonderland, but I wouldn't exchange places with her now. Isn't it glorious here?"

Unconsciously she spoke her last sentence aloud, and the gentle voice of Madame Du Bois behind her answered softly, "Ah, *so* glorious! It is *living!*"

Though unaware of her teacher's presence up to that moment, Tabitha was not even startled to find her there, but greeted her with the old-time girlish ardor and bright, sunny smile which told Madame more than any words could possibly have done.

Circling Tabitha's slender waist with one arm, the little French woman drew the girl toward her, and after searching the winsome face tenderly, she quite unexpectedly said, "Mademoiselle did not eat dinner wiz us tonight."

"Miss Jeremy never fails to notice an absence, does she?" sighed Tabitha somewhat wistfully, for she had forgotten entirely that the supper hour had passed long ago, and, possessing a healthy girl's appetite, she was hungry.

"Neezer did Mees Pomeroy."

"But in a different way."

Madame laughed gayly. "Yes, zat is true, but Mees Jeremy, she sinks she is doing ze best sing always. And she was most kind to-night. She sent Katie upstairs wiz your lunch, you know."

"Did she? I haven't been in my room yet. Did—did Gloriana get some, too?"

"Oui, Mademoiselle. Go eat your dinner now. You are hungry from so long fasting. Or is it sinking about your jolly Hallowe'en frolic which makes you forget your lunch all zis time?"

"Hallowe'en frolic?" Tabitha paused in her hasty flight toward the closed door of her room behind which Chrystobel was doubtless already busy with her morrow's lessons.

"You did not hear? But no, it has just been made known in ze dining-room to-night, and you were not zere to hear."

"No, I haven't heard a whisper about it. Fact is, I haven't seen any of the girls since tea. I had only come upstairs myself when you found me here mooning. What about Hallowe'en? I am wild to know."

"All girls are alike," declared Madame, highly amused at Tabitha's unsuppressed curi-

osity. "So inquisitive always. It iss Madeline's invitation to go to her Beach home on loads of hay—what you call it?—for a frolic—"

"But that is twenty miles away!"

"Yes, it iss a long way, but you stay all night."

"Gracious! what will they do with so many? Surely *all* can't go at one time."

"All are asked to go. Zey haf a big, big barn, and next door is a vacant cottage which can be used, too. We—camp out and haf a jolly time."

"Isn't that grand! Are all the teachers going with us?"

"Mees Jeremy, maybe, will stay at home—"

"But will she let the rest of us go? I had forgotten for the minute that Miss Pomeroy is away."

"Oh, Madeline is foxy—zat is not slang, is it?—and she wrote Mees Pomeroy first. Ze principal says 'yes,' of course. Hallowe'en comes this year on Friday, so ze lessons will not suffer. We stay all night and come home Saturday morning on ze cars."

"Isn't that perfectly splendid! Madame, I 'most believe you are as eager to go as I am. When is Hallowe'en? How far off, I mean?"

"Ten days—only next week Friday. Not so long to wait, you see."

"No, and yet it *seems* a long time when one is looking forward to a holiday like—" Suddenly she remembered the dresses promised to Gloriana, and abruptly interrupted her enthusiastic remarks to say hastily, "But I must stop gossiping this minute and have a tussle with my lessons, else to-morrow I'll be dunce again."

"Then do not forget to eat some lunch first," cautioned the little French teacher, as once more the girl started for her room.

But her reminder was needless, for Tabitha was decidedly hungry, and finding the room deserted and Chrystobel's books gone, she pounced upon the tray like one famished, and devoured every crumb before doing anything else.

Then a note pinned to the curtain caught her eye, and opening it she read the brief message:

"DEAR TABITHA: Gwynne Ralston is sick in the infirmary, and so I have permission to stay all night with Hattie. I knew you wouldn't care about being left alone—or perhaps you could get G. H. to sleep with you. Chrystobel Clayton."

"Good!" exclaimed Tabitha in relief, as her eyes swept hastily down the page. "Now I can hunt up those dresses without any troublesome questions being asked." Then as she read the scribbled words a second time, and caught their full significance she frowned in annoyance, and muttered disapprovingly, "She is getting altogether too thick with Hattie Horner. I never did trust that girl and I hate to see Chrystie take up with her. Dear me! *Everything* has gone wrong this year!" A gusty sigh escaped her, and tearing the scrap of paper into tiny bits, she watched them slip through her fingers and flutter uncertainly downward into the waste-basket.

Then, recalling that afternoon's transformation of homely Gloriana, she smiled with satisfaction, and straightway turned to her wardrobe in search of the garments in question.

"The girls won't know her," she whispered in glee. "Who would ever have thought that just doing one's hair up in a different fashion would change her appearance so much? And she is really quite pretty. Not *pretty,* exactly, but decidedly attractive. With some decent clothes she would look as well as any of the other girls—better than many, for she certainly has lovely eyes and hair. Here is one dress. I'll change that collar a little and put on a different tie so the girls will be less apt to recognize it. Lucky I never wore either one but a time or two. With this one I can rip the band off the skirt, and give her that plain white guimpe I have never had on yet. That certainly ought to be disguise enough, and if they fit her anywhere near, she will look swell. Now the question is, how to get them into her room. If Cassandra were to know, she would torment the life out of the poor girl. I wonder how I can work it?"

As if in answer to her question, there came a timid tap at the door, and in response to Tabitha's cordial, "Come," Gloriana shyly entered the room.

"Just the person I want to see!" exclaimed Tabitha, shaking out the folds of the plain, but pretty navy blue sailor suit, and tossing it to the girl in the doorway. "Put it on. I am anxious to see how it sets. I'll have the other ready in a jiffy."

She fell to ripping off the condemned band on the skirt of the second garment, while Gloriana quickly donned the altered dress, and with pleased eyes surveyed the image reflected in the mirror. "It—it looks nice, doesn't it?" she faltered apologetically, when Tabitha caught her gazing with undisguised satisfaction at the natty figure in the glass.

"Fine!" responded the older girl in frank admiration. "It was certainly made for you, and I believe this other one is even prettier. They are both loose enough so your crutches won't bother much, I think."

"Perhaps—in time—I can throw away the horrid things," Gloriana jerked out, trying hard to feel at ease in her new garb, but finding it difficult to believe the evidence of her own eyes.

"What?" Tabitha was startled.

"I am better already," explained Gloriana,

plunging into the middle of her story. "The gymnasium teacher says it is only neglect which has made me lame, and the exercises she has been giving me have helped a lot, even in this short time."

"And she says you will some day walk as well as the rest of us?" Tabitha was genuinely interested now.

"Oh, no, not as *well,* because one leg will always be a little longer than the other; but I won't have to use crutches many months more, she thinks."

"How perfectly splendid! Won't it seem nice to be like other girls?" The unlucky words slipped from Tabitha's lips before she herself had grasped their full meaning, and the next instant she could have bitten her tongue out with remorse, for a deep shadow dimmed the radiance of the thin, freckled face, and Gloriana retorted bitterly, "That will never be. I am nothing but a freak."

Just a second Tabitha was tongue-tied, while she strove to think of something wise and kind to say; then she blurted out, "Don't say that, because it isn't true. *I* think you are very clever and lots better looking than most

of the girls here. And so will they when they see you in your new togs."

"With my red hair and pug nose and green eyes and freckle-spatters?"

"Your red hair fixed like that is lovely; pug noses are common as dirt in the world; your eyes are gray, not green; and you haven't one freckle more than Grace Tilton."

"Grace Tilton! I never noticed that she was freckled."

"Folks wouldn't know you were, either, if you weren't so sensitive about it."

Gloriana opened her mouth to state a few facts which her companion had evidently forgotten, but at that moment the busy scissors ceased their snipping, and the amateur seamstress exclaimed, "There! That's done. See your other new dress? It only needs a little pressing to take that stitching out, and I'll take it down to the laundry in the morning if you wish. Where is Cassandra? Is the coast clear so you can carry the clothes to your room now, or must we smuggle them in after lights are out?"

"She is downstairs in the office."

"Then Miss King *did* report her?"

"She thinks *I* did, and when Miss Jeremy gave her fits before the whole school, Cassandra sassed back; so she has to remain in the office for a while."

"Well, I am sorry the whole thing happened—"

"I'm not."

"Not?"

"I might never have known you if it hadn't been for that. It was—very good of you—to stand up for me when she—lied."

"Oh, that's nothing! I am glad for that part of it, too." Tabitha was blushing furiously from embarrassment, and bundling up the second new dress, she gently pushed Gloriana toward the door, saying, "You had better hurry these things into your closet while Cassie is out. Then no one will have an idea where they came from, and they can't tease you."

This was a new idea to Gloriana, and she paused slightly, the light dying out of her gray eyes again. Then murmuring a hasty, "Thank you," she slipped noiselessly across the narrow corridor into her own room. Cassandra was there before her, but she did not look up as her

room-mate entered; and Gloriana, with a frightened glance from her new dress to the red, swollen, pouting face bending over the cluttered table, hurriedly stuffed the other garment behind the dresser, and sidled unobtrusively into her place at the other half of the table, where she fell to studying with a zeal she had not known since coming to Ivy Hall, feeling thankful that Cassandra kept her eyes glued to her books.

The half-past nine o'clock gong broke the stillness of the room with its clamor, and Gloriana, still deep in the morrow's history lesson, began mechanically to unlace her shoes, knowing that in fifteen minutes she must be in bed and the lights turned out. Cassandra, who had done little real studying that evening, in spite of her evident absorption, hailed the sound of the bedtime summons with relief, and, slamming her geography shut with a bang, she commenced to scrabble her property together in reckless haste, when inadvertently her eyes chanced to fall upon her transformed room-mate. She paused in her task, looked again, blinked incredulously, and then de-

manded in harsh, aggressive tones, "Where did you get that dress?"

"None of your business," retorted Gloriana, as much surprised at her own answer as was Cassandra.

"Stole it, I'll bet," taunted the young scamp, stung to the quick by the unusual, independent air of her companion, who, heretofore, had never ventured to answer back, no matter how great the provocation.

"Perhaps, but as long as you haven't missed it from your wardrobe, you have nothing to say."

Cassandra subsided quite unexpectedly, and in silence the two girls tumbled into bed.

Gloriana thought the dress incident was closed, and hugged herself with rapture that the battle was so easily won. And really, Tabitha could have chosen no better time for introducing her protégé in her new garb, for the girls, excited over the prospect of such an unusual Hallowe'en celebration, were too deeply interested in their own plans for that night to bestow more than passing notice upon their ugly duckling now turned into a swan.

True, they stared at her in a most disconcerting fashion the first morning that she appeared in her pretty sailor suit, and nudged each other and whispered behind their napkins, but as they seemed to approve of the change which had taken place over night, and failed to recognize the altered garments, Gloriana's last fear subsided, and she settled down contentedly in her corner, determined to make the most of her year at Ivy Hall, which promised after all to be a happy one.

Tabitha was in her element. She laughed and chattered as she had not done for weeks. She even beamed upon naughty Cassandra, who was at that very minute plotting mischief; and her lessons were so well prepared that her teachers were both astonished and gratified, and held a secret meeting to exult over the fact that at last the school had settled down to work.

"If I had thought the prospect of a Hallowe'en party would have worked such wonders," sighed Miss White, fanning herself after a brisk if somewhat undignified jig with the geometry instructor, "I would have proposed one every week from the start."

"You make a mistake," Madame declared, with a grave shake of her head. "Eet iss not ze party which haf created such a wonder. Zere have been parties before."

"Then how do you account for it?" demanded Miss Cornwall.

"The calm which precedes a storm," predicted Miss Jeremy, who was finding the responsibility of substitute principal very wearying, and was eagerly, anxiously counting the days till Miss Pomeroy should return. "If they will just stay so angelic for a month longer, I shall be content, but that is too much to expect of seventy or eighty girls."

"Cheer up," chirped Miss King, making ready to depart to her own domains. "The worst is yet to come."

"You brilliant optimist!" they chorused in derision, and the impromptu meeting broke up gaily. But Miss King's prophecy was fulfilled a few days later, and the storm broke.

It was Thursday evening before the eventful All Saints' Eve, and the girls in a state of exhilarated anticipation, were desperately trying to prepare the next day's lessons so that no penalties would at the last moment bar

them from enjoying Madeline's carefully planned entertainment, when the sound of excited voices in hot dispute broke the stillness of the dormitories, and the girls on the Second Floor simultaneously lifted their heads and listened.

"It's Cassandra nagging her room-mate again," said Chrystobel indifferently, returning to her books once more.

"Cassie ought to be spanked!" Tabitha half rose from her chair as if to interfere, but before she had taken a step, the door across the hall slammed viciously, and Gloriana burst into the room like a whirlwind, her arms filled with a crumpled mass of galatea and gingham, and her gray eyes blazing with the consuming fire of a volcano. Both startled girls were instantly aware that their angry mate was wearing the somber, ill-fitting bombazine, but neither at that time noticed that the familiar crutches were nowhere in evidence.

She gave them no chance to ask the questions trembling on their lips, but hurled both dresses straight at Tabitha's head, screaming in strange, rage-choked tones, "Take your old clothes, Tabitha Catt, and give them to some

beggar who will appreciate your condescension. I prefer my own rags and independence!"

Tabitha stood like one petrified, uncomprehending, yet sick at heart, but Chrystobel managed to stammer, "Wh-what do you mean?"

"Ask *her* what I mean! She can tell you. I believed all she said. I thought she was different from the rest—but I was mistaken. She has no more heart than—"

Madame's arms gently enfolded the raging girl, and Madame's voice, soft and soothing, mildly inquired, "My child, what iss all zis trouble about?"

The flush died from Gloriana's face, leaving it white as paper; the burning fury in her eyes was suddenly quenched, and the miserable girl burst into wild sobs, as she suffered herself to be led from the room.

But Tabitha caught the words, "She—promised not to—tell a soul, and—everyone in school knows!" Mechanically she hung up the rejected garments among her own. Still in a daze, she crossed the hall to Cassandra's room, but Cassandra had vanished,

and Gloriana was with Madame, so she returned to her books, though further study that night was impossible. Chrystobel watched her furtively, alarmed at the frozen look of utter wretchedness upon the thin face, but she wisely forebore to speak, and was glad when the gong rang for lights out, and darkness hid the misery of her companion.

Tabitha slept little that night, and when the rising bell pealed its summons through the house, she had been up and dressed for an hour, waiting impatiently for the darkness to lift. This was to have been such a joyous day, and now Cassandra had spoiled it all. Yes, it was Cassandra. Who else would have done so mean a thing? Cassandra had two scores to settle, one against Tabitha for exposing her before the cooking class, and one against Gloriana for being her room-mate. She had revenged herself against both in one move, and was in her element; but discretion is the better part of valor, and realizing that Tabitha would surely call her to account, she obtained permission to spend the night with one of the third-floor girls, and when the maid from Silver Bow tapped imperatively at the

door across the hall, no one answered. The room was empty. Neither bed had been disturbed.

Madame met her as she was stealing back to her own room, and answered the unspoken question in the troubled black eyes by saying gravely, "Yes, she is seek. Nurse has taken her into ze infirmary. No, do not alarm yourself unnecessarily, mademoiselle, she iss not *verry* seek. It iss ze excitement which runs up a fever and ze head aches badly. She sinks everybody hates her and it makes her verry sorrowful."

"May I see her?" pleaded Tabitha eagerly. "Perhaps I can explain now. She wouldn't listen last night, and anyway, I was too surprised to know what to say."

Madame Du Bois gently shook her head. "It iss wise to say nossing more just yet. She haf a misunderstanding, and iss too nervous to see sings straight even now. I tell her she is mistaken in her thoughts, but she will only cry and cry. Pretty soon she be better."

"Can't she go to-night, then?"

"Oh, no! She has no wish to, and if you see her now you would understand zat it iss

better she should stay here. Her eyes—zey is almost shut, and her nose it is skinned with hot tears. She iss more comfortable in bed to-day."

"Do—do you suppose she will ever consent to wear the dresses again?"

"Maybe, but she iss verry proud, and it hurts her when she is poked fun at. She *say* she will never take zem again. She wants to go home. She iss so unhappy."

Involuntarily Tabitha clenched her fists and her black eyes snapped dangerously. "I'd like to thrash Cassandra Hertford until she couldn't stand," she muttered wrathfully.

"Oh, no," protested the little French woman. "Surely you would not soil your hands by her. Leave her to the mercies of Mees Pomeroy. She comes home Monday."

"Monday! Next Monday! In three days?"

"Yes, she will be here soon now. Ze little muzzer is well again, so she can come back to her school."

Tabitha descended to the dining-hall feeling much better for her little talk with the French teacher, and with her anger against the naughty Cassandra considerably abated. If

Miss Pomeroy was to be home so soon, Cassandra's punishment could wait until then. Nevertheless, it was far from a happy day for Tabitha. She could not forget the look of anguish and hurt pride in the face which had confronted her the night before, and the fiercely-spoken, defiant words persisted in dancing across the lesson page, however hard she tried to put them from her.

Nor was it any better when evening came, and the troop of merry, mischievous girls were jolted away in the great hayracks to Madeline's Beach home, twenty miles distant. It seemed to Tabitha that everyone was having a good time except herself, for they kept the hills ringing with their songs and laughter and funny stories, till even that twenty-mile ride seemed short. Had she known the truth of the matter, few of the girls were really wholeheartedly enjoying the elaborate house party in spite of its unique features and mysterious atmosphere; for Madame had made the most of her opportunity to win sympathy for the wretched prisoner at the Hall, and more than one conscience was pricking its owner with relentless thrusts.

So, though ghosts walked, weird lights gleamed, queer fortunes were told, and witchery held sway till midnight, all the while thoughts of Gloriana's grief disturbed the evening's pleasure until the pupils from Ivy Hall were glad when the party drew to a close and they were settled for the night in barn, cottage and tents—anywhere there was a nook large enough to stow away a girl. It was almost more fun getting ready for bed than it had been playing ghost, and morning was two or three hours old before all the giggling and whispering ceased, and silence reigned over the place.

But regardless of the shortness of their slumber, Miss King roused them all at daybreak, they prepared their own breakfast with much merriment and fun over huge campfires in the yard, and at an early hour boarded the cars for Ivy Hall, tired, sleepy, but happy—or apparently so. Their frolic had been a decided success, everyone declared, and the girls trooped noisily away to their rooms, each unaware that her mates had found anything to mar the perfect harmony of their gala day.

Tabitha could hardly wait to hang up her

wraps and put her part of the room in order before she plumped down in front of the desk, drew out pen and paper, and began a hurried scribble, for a brilliant plan had come to her during the night, and she was anxious to work it out at once.

Chrystobel paused in her more leisurely movements to stare curiously at her roommate, as she asked, "Well, what are you in such a hurry for? Is it a life and death matter? Bet you are writing to Carrie!"

"Yes," Tabitha admitted, flushing slightly, for this was to be a very different letter from those she usually wrote to her chum, but she could not take Chrystobel into her secret.

"You two are the greatest cronies!" sighed her companion enviously. "Can't you wait till you get your coat off before you scribble all about the party last night?"

Tabitha laughed. "Carrie likes to know what we are doing here," she answered simply, and then fell to chewing her pen-holder in frowning meditation, for it had just occurred to her that Carrie wasn't the person she ought to write to after all.

"Tom wouldn't do, either," she sighed after

racking her brain in a fruitless search for the proper one to take into her confidence. "Neither would Dad nor Uncle Decker. Aunt Maria's taste is perfectly abominable. She would be worse than none at all. Perhaps Carrie could order through some other city, but even then the girls might suspect. No, it can't be Carrie. There! Why didn't I think of her before? Mrs. Vane is just the person. They are in Utah now, and she will have time to do it before they go back to Denver."

Hastily pushing aside the sheet she had already begun to Carrie, she took a fresh page, and commenced writing rapidly.

"Dear Mrs. Vane:

"This is such a favor to ask of you, and yet I know you will be glad to help me out. It isn't just for me, you see, but for an unhappy lame girl who won the scholarship place at Ivy Hall this year, and has no decent clothes to make her look respectable. But she had the grit to come just the same and sticks to her determination to get all the education she can in spite of the way the girls poke fun at

her. She used to live with a half crazy woman, who kept her from going to the poor farm or an orphan asylum when everyone else had turned her adrift. All the children in town made sport of her there, too, so you see she has never had a nice time anywhere.

"We are very much alike, I reckon, temper and unhappiness and all—thinking folks don't like her, and making herself miserable on account of it, though I must admit that some of the girls have been *very* mean and rude to her. She looks lots different—almost handsome—when she is dressed up, but she won't wear some of my perfectly new, only-washed-once dresses which shrunk so much that they are too tight for me now, because her roommate, who is a very disagreeable child, found out they were mine and teased her until she was boiling mad.

"What I should like to have you do is get her some nice clothes and ship them to her direct so she won't know who sent them, and none of the girls will suspect that it wasn't some friend of hers. I know fifteen dollars isn't much to buy a whole wardrobe with, but it will get her a lot more things than she has

now. Let one dress be white, as she seems to like white clothes very much and watches all of us more when we are wearing white than when we are dressed in any other color. That dress you sent me in August fits me just fine; so I knew you could get things for her easy, as she is my size shrunk by washing. Well, you know what I mean, don't you, even if I don't know how to express it?

"She needs some shoes, too, and get as many dresses as there is money for. Send them before you leave Salt Lake, please, as none of the girls know I have any friends there, and they won't dream I had anything to do with it.

"Oh, yes, I nearly forgot to tell you her name. It is Gloriana Holliday, and the girls torment her by calling her Glory-on-us or Glorious Holliday. I know this must tease her because I've got a name myself. This is an awfully hurried scrawl, Mrs. Vane, but I want to get the dresses here as soon as possible, and see if she won't like school better.

"Your loving friend,
"Puss."

CHAPTER VI

GLORIANA RUNS AWAY

"Tabitha! Kitty! Have you seen the bulletin board since noon?" shrieked Jessie Wayne, plunging recklessly through the rose garden in search of Tabitha, who, snugly ensconced in her favorite nook, was puzzling over a refractory geometry problem.

"No; haven't had time," answered the black-eyed girl without looking up.

"Well, Miss Pomeroy is expected to-night—"

"That's no news. Madame told me last Friday."

"But we girls are to meet her at the depot."

"What girls?" Tabitha's pencil slipped from her fingers and fell unheeded in the grass.

"Why, Julia and Chrystie and Grace and Gwynne and Myra and you and me and—well, there are twelve of us altogether, and Miss Cornwall is to chaperone the bunch.

Isn't that great? You better come and get ready. The train is due at six o'clock."

"And it is just four now," jeered Tabitha in derision. "But what I can't understand is how it happened."

"How what happened?"

"That we didn't know any sooner. We asked Miss Jeremy Saturday if a delegation from the school couldn't meet her when she arrived and she set her foot down flat."

"Miss Jeremy is always changing her mind, and it's a lucky thing for us, too, sometimes."

"Sometimes," echoed Tabitha, picking up her pencil and closing her geometry on the unsolved problem, "and this is one of the times. When was the notice posted?"

"Don't know. Chrystie just now saw it as she was coming through the hall, and she spread the news. Oh, aren't you glad that you are one of the dozen?"

"I'm lots gladder to think Miss Pomeroy is almost home. Perhaps things will straighten out now."

"You are thinking of Gloriana. Yes, 'twill be all right now. Gloriana is really pretty, did you know it? And Grace says she is ever

so clever, only she will never show off. Chrystie reported that Gloriana's name was among the bunch, but I guess she got confused, for it isn't there now. My, but maybe Cassandra isn't mad to think she isn't one of the delegation! She nearly raised the roof."

"Blames it all on her room-mate, I suppose."

"Quite likely. Aren't you coming to dress? What if it is two hours till train-time, it takes a *few* minutes to get down town, and we want to look our best to-night."

Tabitha laughed teasingly, but allowed herself to be dragged away by the impatient Jessie; and about an hour later twelve faultlessly clad, excited girls filed out of the gates in tow of stately Miss Cornwall, bound for the depot where the principal was to arrive. Nor was there much time to spare after they reached the station, for the train was on time, and the girls had scarcely found positions by the iron gates when the puffing monster drew into the yards, coughing and belching, and almost the first person to alight was their beloved Miss Pomeroy.

Grace spied her first. "There she is! There is Miss Pomeroy!" she screamed fran-

tically, and darted through the gates into the principal's arms before the others could get a good glimpse of her. Then all followed Grace's lead, each trying to relieve the surprised lady of her grips, hand-satchel, extra wraps, anything that seemed at all detachable; while Miss Pomeroy hugged them impartially, laughed at their zeal, and felt deeply grateful for the uncertain shadows of the smoky station yard, which hid the quick tears she could not suppress.

"Vera and Madeline are as chummy as ever, I see. Yes, Grace, my baggage is all attended to. Tabitha is still growing tall. Julia, I really believe you are getting—fat. No, we won't take a taxicab. How could we all get inside of one? I regard it as quite an honor to patronize the street-cars to-night. No, I was not expecting such a delegation to meet me, but I should have boarded a street-car instead of hiring a hack if I had found myself sole alone at the depot. Now are you satisfied? Here, this way—it is shorter. How is everything moving at the school, Miss Cornwall?"

Giving directions and imparting informa-

tion, asking questions and answering them all in the same breath, Miss Pomeroy steered her rampaging brood through the throng of bustling people surging in and out of the big depot, and piloted them across the corner to await their car.

In the mêlée, Tabitha, separated from her companions, and becoming confused at the noise and jangle of the street traffic, darted first one way and then the other, trying to dodge a honking automobile and a prancing horse, until a blue-coated policeman rescued her and guided the bewildered girl back to the station corner from which she had just come.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Tabitha, pausing on the curb to shake the dust from her clothes and get her bearings. "What geese policemen are! Here I am at the depot again and goodness only knows where the rest of the crowd is. Wonder if they will miss me and come back to look, or will they know I've got sense enough to reach home all right? I'd better 'phone, so they won't worry. Why —what—Gloriana Holliday, where did you come from and—what are you—doing here?"

Diving recklessly through the crowd, she seized the forlorn-looking cripple girl by the shoulder and held her fast, in spite of her efforts to twist herself free.

"Let me go! Take your hands off me!" commanded the unlucky Gloriana in wild distress. "Can't you find anything to do but spy on me? I *won't* go back to Ivy Hall. I hate it! And everybody in it! I am going home. You shan't stop me. Granny Conover won't turn me away even if I am ugly and ragged and crippled. Oh, why was I ever born!" Exhausted by her flight from the school, she ceased struggling against Tabitha's greater strength, threw one arm across her face, and burst into a torrent of tears, unmindful of her surroundings, and too tired to care who saw.

"Hush, oh, hush!" pleaded Tabitha, genuinely distressed and alarmed at the storm she had provoked. "Don't cry like that. See what a crowd is gathering about us. Come with me around the corner, into the waiting-room—anywhere out of this throng."

Half dragging, half pushing, she coaxed the girl into the waiting-room, now almost de-

serted, and forced her into a seat, while she dropped down beside her and tried to stop the flood of heart-breaking tears.

But Gloriana only sobbed the harder, and Tabitha was almost in despair, when suddenly the lame girl gulped back her grief and demanded fiercely, "What made you follow me?"

"I didn't."

"Then why are you here?"

"I came with the rest to meet Miss Pomeroy."

"You weren't with them when they got on the car. I saw them myself."

"I got mixed up with the horses and automobiles in the street and the crazy policeman who fished me out thought I was bound for the depot."

"Huh!" Gloriana gave an incredulous sniff.

"You don't believe me, do you?"

Gloriana answered with another sniff.

"I am sorry," said Tabitha simply, yet thoroughly distressed.

Gloriana merely lowered her arm a fraction of an inch and peeped at her companion.

"You still think I am as hateful as Cassandra, don't you? But I never told her nor anyone else about those dresses, honest."

The arm slipped a little lower, and a muffled voice demanded, "Not a single soul?"

"Not a single soul!"

"Then how did—did she—find out?"

"She must have guessed it, and then you admitted it yourself when she taunted you."

Gloriana was silent; that was what Madame had tried to make her understand the night the unhappy event had occurred.

"Do—you still—think I am—lying?"

"N-o."

"And you will go back to the Hall with me?"

"I—oh, I *can't* do that, Tabitha! I couldn't stand it another minute. That's why I ran away. Cassandra rubbed my name from the bulletin board. I saw her do it. She—she's always up to something. She hates me. I —I—Cassandra—" Gloriana was in tears again.

"Cassandra is a cowardly sneak!" cried Tabitha wrathfully. "Chrystie said your name was among the others on the bulletin

board. Miss Jeremy will settle with her for rubbing it out,—with Cassandra, I mean."

"It isn't only that. She—she says such things. I *can't* go back and listen to her again!"

"Miss Pomeroy is home now. Things will be different. Cassandra won't dare to hector you."

"She will do it on the sly. I am—so different from the other girls. I—I haven't the same kind of clothes—and I *won't wear yours!*"

"Maybe you will get some—" Tabitha bit her tongue just in time to keep her secret from tumbling off the tip.

"No, I won't. I can't earn them here, and that is the only way I could ever get them. Things don't *happen* to me. I have to *dig* for everything I get. I—I am a coward, I know, but I *can't* stand Cassandra's flings."

"You don't have to, Glory, dear," said Tabitha, slipping her arm about the heaving shoulders. "Miss Pomeroy will change your room, I know."

"All the rest are full, and besides—no one else wants me."

"I do."

The curved arm was hastily jerked away from the damp, crimson face, and Gloriana stared in dumb amazement at her companion. "You!" she gasped.

"Yes."

"You—you're fooling!"

"No, I am not."

"But Chrystobel!"

"I—I—Miss Pomeroy can arrange it."

"She won't like it."

"Who? Miss Pomeroy?"

"No, Chrystobel."

"She'll not care—much," replied Tabitha bitterly, recalling with a jealous pang how frequently of late her room-mate had sought the companionship of Hattie Horner on the third floor.

"I think she will."

"Not if there is any chance of chumming with Hattie. Gwynne Ralston rooms with her now, and they don't agree much better than—"

"Cassandra and I," finished Gloriana, as Tabitha hesitated.

"Well, yes. But then, Chrystobel and I were enemies the first time we met," she re-

plied soberly, remembering the trying scenes of that night so long ago.

"You were?" Gloriana's tear-swollen eyes popped wide in surprise. "How did you ever get to be such friends then?"

"Oh, Miss Pomeroy lectured us, and we both saw what fools we had been."

"I have tried and tried to make up to Cassandra, but—"

"Cassandra is a thoroughly spoiled darling, and the only person on earth who can get along with her is Carrie Carson," interrupted Tabitha, speaking emphatically.

"Carrie must be an angel," sighed the forlorn-looking crippled girl. "Grace says she is one of the most popular girls Ivy Hall ever had."

"Grace is right. Carrie is a darling. Everyone loves her."

"I wish my reputation read like that," sighed Gloriana.

"We can't all be Carrie Carsons," said Tabitha sagely, "but I know how you feel. I have been there myself. I get so impatient sometimes because things don't go right and I can't do what I want to. I used to fret

so about my name and made not only myself but everybody around me unhappy."

"Fretting about your name!"

"Yes. Don't you think it is horrid? Hardly anyone ever hears it the first time without laughing; and though I don't want to change it now like I used to, it makes me prickle and sting all over when folks giggle about it."

"Oh, I think that is such a dear name!" Gloriana exclaimed with such genuine sincerity that Tabitha drew back astonished.

"My name? Tabitha Catt?" she managed to gasp.

"Yes. It sounds so homelike and contented and—as if folks petted and loved you. Dear little furry kittens! Is there anything quite as dear as one of them? It seems so queer to think of your fretting about your name when you are strong and well and pretty, and everyone loves you."

This was a very different viewpoint than had ever presented itself to Tabitha before, and she sat quite still in the wonder of it.

"Don't you like cats?" the eager voice persisted when Tabitha did not speak.

"I used to hate them," was the reply.

"Oh!"

"Listen, I'll tell you." 'Twas a sudden inspiration, and though Tabitha had long ago decided to forget all the sorrows and unhappiness of her neglected childhood, she found herself pouring out the whole sad tale into the ears of this other forlorn bit of humanity, who had climbed even steeper paths in her short life.

When she had finished, Gloriana sat in shocked silence for a moment, then breathed softly, "And I envied you! I thought you always had everything you wanted and that—you just weren't—interested in—girls like me."

"Oh!"

The sharp cry stabbed Gloriana to the heart, and she hastily added, "But now I know differently. Isn't it queer how we envy people sometimes and then find out that they have had more cause for sadness than we ourselves? I am an orphan both ways now, but I can remember my father and mother plainly and they were so lovely and good. That has been my one pretty picture ever since they

died and I was hurt. *They* never thought me ugly and homely. If my red hair ever bothered them a bit, I never knew it. They *loved* me. It is such a comfort to know my father always cared—Oh, I'm sorry I said that! I didn't mean to."

"Don't mind," smiled Tabitha gently. "Daddy is the dearest father now that any girl could wish for, and we aren't going to remember anything but the happy things in our lives. That is the best way, I think."

"Yes," sighed Gloriana, "for there are always sure to be some happy spots somewhere for everyone—even cripples."

"But you are getting well, the gymnasium teacher says."

"I'll always be lame, and what good can a deformed body do in the world? Sometimes it seems useless to try any more."

Feeling the old bitterness creeping up again in the weary heart, Tabitha groped blindly for some cheering thought, and half unconsciously repeated:

> "'If you are too weak to journey
> Up the mountain steep and high,

You can stand within the valley,
Where the multitudes pass by.
You can chant in happy measure,
As they slowly pass along;
Though they may forget the singer,
They will not forget the song.'"

"Oh," whispered Gloriana with brightening eyes, "where did you learn that? Mother used to sing something like that to me when I was a tiny tot, but I never could remember all the words. They—they seem meant just for me. Here I've stewed and fretted all to myself and kept as far away from the girls as I could, thinking they disliked me, when, perhaps if I had tried to *make* them like me, it would have been different. I—I'll go back with you, Tabitha, and try again."

"Good!" cried Tabitha, pleased and infinitely relieved at this unexpected decision. "I am sure you will have a better time, Gloriana. I have been a miserable prig all these weeks, but I am ever so sorry, and I'll try my best now to make up for it."

"You have done that already," murmured Gloriana, seized by a sudden fit of shyness in her surprise at Tabitha's confession. "I

thought when I left Ivy Hall this afternoon that I never could smile again. What do you suppose they will do to me for running away?"

This thought was worrying Tabitha, but she answered confidently, "Perhaps they won't have missed you. Everyone will be so excited that maybe we can slip in unnoticed. Dinner will be late on account of Miss Pomeroy's return. We'll hurry as fast as we can to make up for lost time, and you steal in the back way while I go up the front. Here comes a car now. What luck!"

It was as Tabitha had hoped. In the confusion and gaiety of welcoming their beloved principal home from her long absence, Gloriana's unceremonious departure had passed unnoticed except by her triumphant yet somewhat frightened room-mate; and even Tabitha's separation from her companions was not discovered until Ivy Hall was reached. Then, though worried and fearful as to her safety, the teachers decided that it would be wisest to wait a car or two to see if the wanderer did not put in appearance, before they adopted any search-party methods, for they knew that the girl was well acquainted with the city, and

surmised that she would board the next car if she had simply lost her comrades in the crush.

So, while Gloriana was timidly creeping in through the shadowy garden, Tabitha skipped blithely up the wide stone steps to the big doors, where teachers and students were anxiously awaiting her coming.

"Here she is!" screamed Mercedes, shocked out of her usual state of placid repose by the general excitement prevailing that night at Ivy Hall.

"The wanderer has returned," announced Grace, dashing into the astonished Tabitha much as one might in a football tussle, and nearly knocking the breath out of the girl.

"Ugh!" gurgled Tabitha, staggering sidewise into precise Miss Jeremy. "I did my best to find you—"

"I should think you did!" exclaimed the startled lady, smoothing down her ruffled plumage, and peering indignantly over the top of her spectacles, to the great amusement of her audience, "and you succeeded very well."

"I am so sorry," murmured Tabitha politely, yet smiling in spite of herself, for

Miss Jeremy indignant reminded her of an angry hen with her feathers ruffled up. "I lost my equilibrium—"

"As well as yourself," put in Vera roguishly. "Where have you been? How did it happen?"

"You will have to hurry if you are ready for dinner on time," suggested one of the teachers, glancing warningly at the clock. With a few hasty words of explanation, Tabitha fled up the wide staircase toward her room, but halted outside the door at the sound of Cassandra's voice in bitter accents saying, "Yes, she is back again. I hoped she was gone for good."

The blood flew to Tabitha's cheeks, rage filled her heart and took possession of her, as the picture of Gloriana in tears rose before her. Flinging open the door, she swept across the room, clutched the petrified Cassandra lolling over the foot-rail of Chrystobel's bed, and shook her vigorously, crying in rage-choked tones, "Yes, she is back, you smug-faced little chit, you miserable, hateful vixen, you deceitful, cowardly minx! Gloriana is back, and no thanks to you. What's more,

she is back to stay and if I catch you bothering her in any way again, it will be a sorry day for you!"

"Let go of me, Tabby Catt!" screamed the child in white heat, struggling to loosen the vise-like grip on her shoulders. "What business have you touching me? I'll tell Miss Pomeroy, coward! You're always picking on someone littler than yourself."

The injustice of the taunt stung Tabitha to the quick, and with a gasp of helpless rage, and one last violent shake, she flung her helpless victim into the hall, straight into the arms of the principal, who, in some mysterious way, had learned of the conflict, and appeared on the scene before anyone was aware of her approach.

Quick to see the advantages of her position, Cassandra dropped to the floor and dissolved in tears, but Tabitha, white as marble and as rigid, unflinchingly faced the disapproving eyes of her principal, and with frozen calmness awaited her sentence. Hattie and Chrystobel, the other occupants of the room, had stood like statues through it all, and now at a signal from Miss Pomeroy, slipped

through the doorway, leaving Tabitha alone to her judgment.

As the black-eyed culprit made no attempt to vindicate herself, the woman briefly commanded, "Explain, please."

"I—I just about shook Cassandra's teeth out," gulped the trembling girl.

"I saw you," replied Miss Pomeroy, with just a shadow of a smile flashing across her lips. "What was your reason for such violent and unladylike conduct?"

"She deserved it!" A dull, angry glow crept up the white cheeks, and the smoldering fire of her eyes leaped into flame.

"What had she done to you?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?" Miss Pomeroy's eyebrows lifted in surprise.

"No, ma'am."

"And yet you shook her."

"Yes, Miss Pomeroy, a rattling good shaking."

"For no reason at all."

"It *was* a reason," the girl burst out hotly. "She—she's a coward! Ask her what she did. Ask any of the girls—they can tell you.

Ask Madame—she knows." And angry, perplexed Tabitha threw herself upon the bed in a passion of tears. A door closed behind her, one opened across the hall, and the muffled murmur of voices in earnest conversation floated through the transom to the ears of the wretched girl exiled in her own room.

Then the doors opened and shut again, and Tabitha was aware that Miss Pomeroy stood beside her even before she spoke. The woman's words were brief. "Tabitha, the dinner-bell rang fifteen minutes ago. Wash your face, apologize to Cassandra, and go down to your place—"

"Oh, Miss Pomeroy! Apologize to *Cassandra!* I—I can't," wailed Tabitha, leaping to her feet and confronting her teacher with tragic eyes.

"You shook her," said the woman inexorably.

"Yes, and if I saw her now I just know I'd do it again."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't. It is not your place to punish the pupils of Ivy Hall, no matter how much they may deserve it, but that is

what you have tried to do with Cassandra. So it is your duty to apologize."

"But I am not sorry. How can I apologize?"

Miss Pomeroy was tempted to laugh, but she merely repeated, "You must immediately apologize to Cassandra for the shaking she received at your hands. Are you going to disobey the rules of Ivy Hall?"

Tabitha caught her breath sharply. Miss Pomeroy had never spoken to her in such a manner since the first dreadful day of her life at boarding-school, and her heart sank within her, but without another word she crossed the hall and knocked at the opposite door.

The principal did not linger to see that her command was obeyed, but briskly descended to the dining-hall where dinner was already half done. Hardly had she taken her place at the head of her table, however, when a flushed, dishevelled figure flew into the room, and Tabitha's mournful voice, half-sobbing, half-defiant, shrilled out, "What did I tell you? I *knew* I would do it. I've sh-shaken Cassandra again. Just like this I did it—" With eyes blinded with tears, she seized the

nearest person by the shoulders—it chanced to be Miss Jeremy—and shook her till her spectacles flew into the gravy, as she sobbed out, "I didn't mean to do it really, but one look at her was enough to send me boiling hot all over, and when she snickered at my apology, I—I just naturally sh-shook her again."

To laugh or to scold? Miss Jeremy, black in the face with suppressed indignation, was near-sightedly fishing in the gravy boat with an olive fork in search of her eye-glasses, for without them she was helpless; but wide smiles wreathed the faces of the other teachers, and the girls were giggling audibly. Even Miss Pomeroy's lips twitched, but signaling for silence, she calmly rose, and in her stateliest manner escorted the sorely-tried Tabitha out of the hall.

CHAPTER VII

TABITHA'S NEW ROOM-MATE

"Chrystobel!" Tabitha cautiously raised her head from the pillow and listened for some sound from the other narrow bed, convinced in her own mind that her room-mate was still awake. "Chrystobel!"

Still no answer. Not the slightest sound broke the stillness of the night, and as it was as black as a pocket in the room, the girl could not distinguish the faintest outlines of anything in the darkness, not even her own bed. The lights had gone out not five minutes before, and it seemed impossible that her companion should have lost herself in the land of dreams so soon.

"Chrystie Clayton, you know you're not asleep. You are just playing 'possum."

"What do you want?" yawned the girl from the other bed, with just a hint of impatience in her voice.

"A new room-mate."

The words slipped from Tabitha's tongue with startling frankness. She had not meant to broach the subject so abruptly, but had carefully rehearsed a full and clear explanation of the contemplated step, for after all, she had grown to love Chrystobel very much, and was loath to part with her. Indeed, she had regretted more than once her rash promise to Gloriana, but with her a promise was a promise, and no thought of backing out ever entered her mind.

"So I have already heard," retorted Chrystobel sarcastically. "Why do you need to consult me at all? My wishes in the matter don't seem to count for much."

"Oh, dear!" groaned Tabitha inwardly, "now I'm in for it. I sometimes wish I had never seen—Ivy Hall." She had meant to say "Gloriana," but for some unknown reason substituted the name of her beloved school, where she had spent some of the happiest hours of her life.

As she made no audible reply to her roommate's scathing remark, Chrystobel continued after an oppressive pause, "I am sure I'm willing to change partners if you have grown so

tired of my company that you would rather have that—that red-headed scarecrow in my place. I certainly admire your taste. You always were queer, but you are growing positively freakish every day of your life. No doubt that is why you prefer to associate with freaks like—"

Splash! Gurgle, choke, gasp! Chrystobel's words were drowned by the contents of a well-aimed glass of water, which flew through the impenetrable darkness of the room straight into her face, drenching both girl and bed.

"Tab-i-tha Catt!" spluttered the enraged victim, catching her breath and trying to find words in which to express her opinion of her room-mate's act. But Tabitha, overcome with remorse the instant the icy deluge left her hand, had scrambled out of her warm nest, caught up her own dressing-gown, and was trying in the blackness to mop up the flood she had poured over her neighbor's pillow, all the while talking as rapidly as her chattering teeth would allow her.

"I'm sorry I did that, Chrystobel. It was positively heathenish of me to think of it, but if you had been a little more Christian in your

remarks, I reckon it would never have happened. Oh, I know you are mad—through and through! I can't see your face, but I can feel it, and I don't blame you one bit. That water was cold and wet, and so are you now, but perhaps next time you will remember not to say such unkind things about Gloriana Holliday. Her red hair and ugly clothes don't make her any less human, and maybe you can imagine how you would like to have folks say such things about you. She has been very unhappy here. Girls about your age are the meanest things that ever lived—"

"You have evidently forgotten that you are no older than I," Chrystobel found voice to utter icily. "What have *you* done to make her happy, hypocrite?"

The poisoned arrow found its mark, and Tabitha's face blanched and her heart grew sick at the venom of the sting. Then very humbly she answered, "I have been a perfect cad, Chrystobel. I've made everyone uncomfortable this year, but I've been just as uncomfortable myself. I knew I ought to be good to that poor little waif, for she needs friends if ever anyone did; but when the girls

made fun of her and laughed at me because I wanted to stand up for her—I did try to at first, Chrystie,—it made me—yes, a hypocrite. I couldn't get my lessons, thinking of her. I couldn't enjoy the good times we planned. I—I hate Ivy Hall and I despised myself. I can't make you understand why I want—why I think Gloriana and I should room together now, Chrystie. You have changed, too, as well as I. You needn't room with Cassandra —that's not at all necessary—"

"I should hope not!" ejaculated Chrystobel, moving impatiently under Tabitha's vigorous application of dressing-gown towel. "Please leave me the rest of my nose, won't you? Already you've rubbed most of it off, and I assure you it is perfectly dry now."

"Oh! I'm sorry. I forgot what I was doing. You are still very wet, and your pillow is soaked. You'll have to sleep in my bed tonight, and I will take yours." With a mighty shove, she ousted the surprised Chrystobel, and shot her into the middle of the floor with a dull thud, where the breathless and indignant girl lay shivering in the darkness while she freed her mind in no uncertain terms.

"Tab-i-tha Catt! What do you take me for—a fish or a rubber ball? Isn't it enough to souse a fellow in ice-water and rub her face off on a horse-blanket, without using her for a sky-rocket, too? What's the matter with you anyway? You aren't the same girl you used to be at all, and I can tell you plainly that the change is no improvement. *None* of the girls like you half as well as they did last year. You can take Gloriana or any other Anna you want for a room-mate just as soon as you please. If you can get along without me, I'm sure I shan't mourn myself to death over you. Hattie Horner is dying to have me room with her, and I'll go where I'm wanted. Now perhaps you will be kind enough to show me where that other bed is. *I* can't find it in this pitch blackness, and I've crawled over every inch of the floor, too."

Tabitha, dazed at this unlooked-for tirade, hurt at the sting of her companion's words, and yet feeling that at least in a measure she deserved it, scrambled out of bed and groped blindly about in search of her lost room-mate. Bang! She collided with a rocking chair, and over it toppled on her bare toes. "Ouch!" she

gasped, nursing the bruised foot with both hands and rapping her head smartly on the corner of the dresser.

"Ouch!" echoed Chrystobel, as the sharp rocker gave her a savage dig in the ribs; and Tabitha, recoiling from the blow on her forehead, tripped over the outstretched figure of her companion and plumped heavily down on top of it. "Tabitha! Are you bent on killing me outright? Then please choose a less painful method. I ain't a worm to be walked on. Where in creation is that bed?"

"You're under it, idiot!" exclaimed Tabitha savagely, smarting with bruises and rebuke. "I generally sleep *in* my bed, not under it."

"I'm not under it!"

"You are—half of you. Here's your head —that's what I sat down on, but where are your feet? Under the bed just like I told you. Crawl out this way. You crab, you're backing further in! There—can you find the bed now?"

Grabbing the hapless Chrystobel by the shoulders, she dragged her forth, stood her on her feet, and plumped her into the middle of the mattress much as one might a huge rag-

baby. Then with a mingled sigh of relief and regret, the subdued Tabitha crept under the damp covers of the other cot, and with no further attempt at explaining matters—for her heart was sore with disappointment and wounded vanity—she turned her face away from the window and tried to sleep.

So Chrystobel and Tabitha parted; and Gloriana, scared, shy and silent, crept across the hall into the vacant place, glad to get away from her tormentor, yet feeling intuitively that she was in some manner to blame for the coldness now plainly observable between the two former friends and room-mates, and being restless and ill at ease in consequence.

Indeed, this spirit seemed to pervade the entire school, for the change came very unexpectedly, and left the girls surprised and wondering. Tabitha was tongue-tied. She could make no explanations without further wounding the sensitive soul of the orphan whom she had taken under her wing to protect. So she shut her lips tightly and refused to talk, repelling all the advances of the curious ones, and taking refuge in her room like some exile.

Chrystobel also held her tongue, but Hattie Horner, elated at this turn of affairs, talked enough for both, and succeeded in spreading the feeling of unrest already flourishing among the girls, much to the dismay of the Ivy Hall staff of teachers, who had looked for the restoring of normal conditions with the return of their chief. Miss Pomeroy alone seemed undisturbed by the course events were taking. All her life she had made a study of the moods and whims of girls, and now very wisely refrained from interfering, feeling sure that her pupils themselves would solve the problem. Although against her rules to change room-mates in the middle of a term, she recognized the crisis which made such a change imperative and without a protest complied with Tabitha's request. Then she sat back to watch the outcome of the battle, for such it seemed to her, with outspoken Tabitha and forlorn Gloriana arrayed against the whole school. But Tabitha was apparently undaunted at the position in which she found herself, and Miss Pomeroy secretly gloried in her pluck, wishing there were more like her.

In reality, Tabitha was sorely perplexed

and dismayed at the attitude of her companions, most of whom let her severely alone, though a few, like Grace, Myra and Gwynne, remained friendly but neutral. And had there been any way out of the dilemma other than deserting crippled Gloriana, she would gladly have taken it. Solitary exile held no charms for her, but having once championed the cause of her weaker comrade, she stubbornly refused to change her stand.

As for Gloriana, once installed in Chrystobel's place, she suddenly lapsed into frightened silence again, and came and went like a shadow, stealing into the class-room just before the gong for recitation rang, and hurrying away the minute the students were dismissed. Her resolve to try again to make friends was not forgotten, but she seemed to recognize the fact that the time was not yet ripe, so she withdrew into the background, effaced herself as far as possible, met half way what few advances were made by the other girls, and waited hopefully.

Tabitha's attitude puzzled her, but she accepted her almost taciturn silence without question, and devoted herself to her lessons,

surprising teachers and pupils alike with her achievements. This was the best thing she could have done, for it convinced the girls that she had rightfully won her place among them, and commanded a certain degree of respect from them, which grew with the passing days. First Grace, then Myra, Gwynne and Jessie ceased to listen to Hattie's gossip, and began to observe for themselves, until one after another evinced a genuine desire to be friendly with the scholarship pupil.

"Gloriana has quite an ability for mathematics," said Madeline somewhat grudgingly one day, as they sat under the great pepper tree, supposed to be studying.

"She is a shark in history," sighed Myra, enviously, for heretofore she had borne off most of her honors in this field.

"Do you know, I used to think she must have cheated to get in here at Ivy Hall," acknowledged Vera, very frankly. "She never seemed to know anything when she first came."

"That's because of the room-mate she had. Cassie used to hide her books and steal her pencils. No wonder she couldn't get her lessons."

"It was pretty good of Kitty to take her in, wasn't it?"

"Yes, I would never have dreamed of such a thing. She is so—so awkward, and self-conscious and so very plain,—homely, in fact."

"Gloriana is far from a homely girl in my estimation," broke in fastidious Gwynne. "Her hair is Titian red and all the rage. I know people who would give a fortune to have hair the color of hers."

The girls suddenly subsided at this unheard-of compliment, and it was some seconds before Julia found voice enough to suggest, "If she had some decent clothes, she would look like—one of us."

"She's improving," Gwynne replied calmly. "Kitty helped rehang that impossible black skirt of hers, so it looks half-way respectable, and in some manner they have doctored up the gingham Cassie tore, so it is quite presentable."

"But imagine having only *two* dresses to one's name! Why, I usually wear two a day."

Behind a cedar hedge close by, Tabitha, bending over her French conjugation, over-

heard the whole conversation, and with a start, remembered the letter she had written so many days before.

"I ought to have heard from Mrs. Vane before this," she thought uneasily. "Let's see—that was more than three weeks ago that I sent the money. Supposing she didn't get my letter? I reckon I'd better write and ask her about it at once."

A few moments of meditation only strengthened her purpose, and collecting her scattered papers, she departed to attend to the matter.

Throwing open the door of her room, she entered hastily, paused abruptly, and ejaculated, "Why, Gloriana, what in the world is the matter?"

In the middle of the floor beside an open box, with her head bowed upon her arms, huddled the rumpled form of Gloriana, and from the convulsive heaving of her shoulders and an occasional subdued sniff, Tabitha knew she was crying. The rug was littered with tissue paper wrappings, and scattered about her were dresses of all styles and descriptions, but, horror of horrors! nearly all were red.

At the sound of Tabitha's voice, the sobbing girl lifted a wet, crimson face, and motioning tragically toward the box full of clothes, she choked despairingly, "Won't the girls ever stop tormenting me?"

Tabitha caught her breath sharply, and in colorless tones half whispered, "Tormenting you?"

"Don't they suppose I know who sent me these things? Do they think for a minute that I'd wear them? Do they imagine I don't realize what a fright I am in red? Oh, dear, it is so hard living in this world!"

"But Gloriana," Tabitha had found her tongue. "The girls never sent you those dresses." A horrible suspicion had seized her. She had forgotten to tell Mrs. Vane of Gloriana's red hair.

"How do you know?"

"Because—because," the girl stammered in confusion, "they wouldn't have the money."

"They would spend all their allowance to do something mean."

"Oh, Glory, don't look at it so," cried Tabitha desperately. "I am sure they don't know anything about it. Some of your friends have

sent you these things, and they didn't remember about your—that red isn't becoming to your complexion. It must have been some of your friends, because the dresses are made of such nice material. If the girls wanted to play a joke on you, they would get something cheaper and not a whole box full, either."

"Y-es," admitted Gloriana, slowly, seeing the logic of Tabitha's argument. "I s'pose that is so, but I haven't got any friends. There is no one who would be sending me things like these."

"Don't you know anyone in Salt Lake?"

"Where do you see Salt Lake?" asked Gloriana quickly. "I couldn't find any mark to show where the box came from."

Caught in her own trap, Tabitha floundered helplessly, "Why—I thought—doesn't that cover say Salt Lake?"

"No."

"I—it looked like that to me."

"Do *you* know anyone in Salt Lake?" Gloriana had a suspicion also.

"Not a soul," responded the older girl promptly, glad that this was the truth.

"Didn't any of your friends ever live there?"

"Never." Mrs. Vane's brief visit to that city could not be called living there.

"Did—has Carrie Carson ever been in Salt Lake?"

"They passed through it last September on their way East, but that is all."

"Oh! Well, I guess there has been a mistake made in sending me these things, all right, for they don't belong to me. I don't know a soul except Granny Conover who would take interest enough in me to send such a load of dresses."

"Maybe she did it."

"Who? Granny Conover? Why, she has only her pension to live on. She would never be able to save enough in the world to get a tenth of what is here. She's as poor as a mouse."

"I don't see how there can be any mistake about it, though," declared Tabitha, after a close scrutiny of the address on the box. "It says 'Ivy Hall' as plain as day, and this is the only Ivy Hall in Los Angeles."

"Yes, it does," sighed Gloriana, more perplexed than ever. "I don't understand it. What shall I do with the stuff?"

"Wear it—"

"And give the girls another chance to torment me? Never!"

"But all the things aren't red. Here is a lovely white dress."

"And here is a beau-ti-ful lavender one," said Gloriana with biting sarcasm, "but it doesn't look very beautiful on me. That white is the only thing in the whole box that I can wear, even if they were meant for me in earnest."

"No, here is a blue one, and this linen-colored dress is lovely. You will look well in that. It is too bad the most of them are red, even to the coat and hat." Poor Tabitha was sick with bewilderment and chagrin at the result of this cherished plan. "It's a puzzle to know what to do about them."

"What iss a puzzle, might I ask?" inquired a gentle voice behind them, and there stood Madame smiling benignly down at the flushed faces bent over the box. "I knocked sree times, and as you keep right on talking, I walked in by myself."

"Oh, Madame!" cried Tabitha in relief, "you are my fairy godmother. You always

happen along when I don't know what to do next, and help me out of the mire. Tell us what to do with these red dresses. They came addressed to Gloriana, but no one—she doesn't know who sent them. It must have been someone who forgot about her hair. Of course, she can't wear the things—not many of them—the way they are. I am sure they were meant for her, but there was some mistake about the red part of it. Can't you tell us what to do?"

Madame searched the troubled black eyes lifted to hers, and suspected the truth. Then one by one she examined the exquisite garments so simply, yet so daintily fashioned, and meditatively remarked, "Zey cost fifty dollars at least, and more as than it iss not hard to believe."

"Oh, not fifty dollars!" began Tabitha; then dropped her tell-tale eyes, and lamely added, "What a sweet little guimpe!"

Madame's brown eyes twinkled with amusement and delight. She had found the maid from Silver Bow a very lovable girl, and it pleased her to know that even she had not correctly estimated the depth of Tabitha's char-

acter. So she bent over the open box and fingered the pretty materials, recognizing what had escaped Tabitha's attention up to that moment, that the dainty garments could not have been bought for many times the paltry sum sent in that Salt Lake letter. But all the while her busy brains were seeking a solution of the perplexing problem. Then a happy thought dawned upon her.

"Yes, I know what we do," she exclaimed gaily. "Zere is a lady I know who has two girls just ze same—same—as tall, I mean, but not so old. Zey is bose very dark—black hair and brown eyes, much like Tabissa here, and she dress zem in red mostly. She will be glad to take zese sings, I know, and we will get blue dresses and brown and gray for Mademoiselle Gloriana, which are colors that look well on her hair."

"Oh, Madame, do you think you can coax the lady to help us out that way?" cried Tabitha, ready to shout for joy at the prospect.

"Oui, mademoiselle—"

"But supposing these things aren't for me!" broke in Gloriana, a sharp fear tugging at her heart. "It would be dreadful to have some-

one come along and claim them just when I'd begun to think they belonged to me."

"Do not trouble yourself about it any more," replied the woman gently, yet with such conviction in her tones that Gloriana was reassured. "Zere is only one Ivy Hall in Los Angeles, and you are the one girl of that name here. What does it matter where the lovely dresses came from? Zey were meant for you and whoever sent zem, wanted you to wear zem in happiness. Maybe it is *your* fairy godmother. Have you ceased believing in good fairies, my dear? Now let us pack up ze red gowns, and I will see my lady at once on ze telephone."

So Madame and the red dresses departed, and in their place came delicately colored garments which blended with Gloriana's luxuriant mane, and were the envy and admiration of the whole school, for the secret of the sender never leaked out, and the air of mystery surrounding the arrival of the box cast its spell over all the girls. They were dear lovers of romance, and Gloriana became an object of such interest and speculation that anyone else would have had her head turned with the flat-

tery and favors showered upon her. But the plucky cripple girl had struggled too long against indifference, dislike and positive neglect to be so easily spoiled, and though she thoroughly enjoyed the stir she had unwittingly created, she remained the same shy, quiet little girl that she had always been, devotedly attached to Tabitha, who for some mysterious reason had suddenly blossomed into her natural, lovable self again, the most popular pupil at Ivy Hall.

CHAPTER VIII

THANKSGIVING DAY AT IVY HALL

Then came blissful days not only for Gloriana, but for the whole school, it seemed. It was as if they were enjoying an Indian summer after a spell of frost and freezing, and the girls laughed and danced and sang from morning till night. But contrary to expectations, lessons did not suffer. In fact, the class-room records had not been so high since school began in the fall, and the teachers rejoiced. But only Miss Pomeroy and Madame really understood what had happened, and each kept her secret well, thankful that the strain under which both pupils and teachers had been laboring so long was at last ended.

Gloriana's mysterious gift had ushered her into a new world. Disdainful glances and giggling whispers no longer met her wherever she went. The girls who had held aloof or regarded her with condescension since her advent at the school quickly descended from

their high horses and crowded about her, willing to be friends now that fortune had turned in her favor. Even Cassandra became quite respectful in her behavior. To do them justice, most of them were heartily ashamed of their previous conduct, and glad of this excuse to make amends.

But Gloriana, though a generous-hearted, forgiving lass, was only human, and the worst of her tormentors ate humble pie a-plenty before they found their way into her good graces. On the other hand, for those who had befriended her in spite of her ugly clothes, plain face and awkward manners, she could not do enough, and this was particularly true in regard to Tabitha; so the title of "Tabitha's Glory," given her in the spirit of ridicule, clung even when truce had been declared and all animosities had ceased. Now, however, neither girl cared, and the name which had once been so hateful to both, took on a different meaning. Tabitha's Glory flourished in the warm sunshine of friendliness and the two girls became such fast friends that wherever one was found, the other was sure to be close at hand.

"What will Carrie say when she finds her bosom chum gone?" laughingly asked Vera of Madeline one afternoon as they strolled past the two comrades studying in the garden. She had not meant the question for Tabitha's ears, but a vagrant breeze wafted the words across the lawn, and both industrious students caught them. Gloriana's face paled with misgiving. In her blissful enjoyment of the new state of affairs, she had forgotten the wonderful Carrie, whose praises were sung by so many lips, and with a sinking heart she glanced hastily at her companion, hoping she had not heard.

But Tabitha was undisturbed. Smiling reassuringly into the troubled gray eyes beside her, she called out mischievously to Vera, before Madeline could make reply, "Don't let that worry you, girls! Carrie is the sort of person who can have more than one chum at a time." And with a roguish giggle at the surprise and discomfiture of the duet on the walk, she returned to her history with renewed energy.

Thus the short hours flew by, and Thanksgiving Day dawned at Ivy Hall. As usual, most of the pupils went home for a brief holi-

day with their families, but there were a few like Mercedes and Tabitha who lived too far away to make the journey in so short a time, and others, like Gloriana, who could not go because of lack of funds.

"Just ten of us, all told," counted Myra Haskell, when the last bus full of happy faces had rolled away down the wide avenue. "Dear me! how dead it will seem with such a small bunch—"

"Dead!" interrupted Tabitha. "Why, that's a perfectly scrumptious number to have a glorious time celebrating. Miss Pomeroy says Ishimato is planning an extra fine dinner for us, and there is the opera in the evening—"

"Opera! Who said opera? A sure-enough opera? Where? Which one? How do you know?" Kate Magee was dancing frantically on Tabitha's toes, trying to make her answer the flood of questions all at once.

"Ouch!" she exclaimed, retreating a step. "It's all on the bulletin board. If you haven't read it yourself, it's not my fault. The opera tickets come from Miss Pomeroy's mother, as her share in the school's celebration."

In the excitement of helping off their mates,

few of the left-behinds had noticed the Thanksgiving Day program outlined on the bulletin board, and at Tabitha's words there was a wild scramble for the hall that each might read for herself.

"At the Auditorium! Isn't that great?" sighed Gwynne, hugging herself rapturously.

"*Il Trovatore!* I've always wanted to hear that!" murmured Clara Kelso.

"*See* it, you better say," suggested Myra, patronizingly. "It will all be sung in Italian, so you can't understand a word. For myself, I'd rather go to the show and see some rattling good comedy. I like to know what is being done, without having to guess whether they are taking poison or are being shocked to death."

"The *music* is all I care about," returned Clara with dignity, for she was constantly being annoyed by what she termed the "plebeian tastes" of her room-mate. "*Music* can be made to tell any story and if you know the sad history of the piece, you will have no trouble understanding the opera, even if it is sung in a foreign tongue."

"Here, here," interposed laughing Kate.

"No squabbling aloud at Ivy Hall during Thanksgiving vacation. *I* call it an added blessing that Mrs. Pomeroy sent us such a treat. I haven't seen an opera since I was ten years old, I believe."

"I propose that we make ourselves familiar with the history of *Il Trovatore* before we go, so we can get more out of it," suggested Tabitha.

"Aye, aye!" chorused the girls.

Gloriana said nothing, but silently followed the group as they chattered on their way to the library in search of the desired information, anticipating deep down in her heart the morrow's pleasures. "Picnic lunch in the park in the morning, impromptu program by the girls in the afternoon—I wonder what that means —Ishimato's dinner at six o'clock, and then the opera. I 'most believe I must be dreaming. The other girls have seen operas before but I never was inside a theater in my life. Will it be the fairy-land I have always pictured it? Oh, I can hardly wait!"

Fortunately for the impatient Gloriana, the intervening hours were crammed full of fun and happiness, and before she realized it, the

day was nearly spent. They were enjoying their impromptu program in the assembly hall late in the afternoon while they awaited the sound of the gong to call them to Ishimato's Thanksgiving dinner, when an unexpected opportunity came for Gloriana to score. Miss Cornwall, who had been instrumental in planning the novel program, gave each girl a slip of paper bearing a number, and as these numerals were called one by one, the owner had to respond in the manner indicated by the teacher. Thus Number Two, for the opening selection on the program, was commanded to favor her audience with a piano solo; and blushing Kate Magee, who could scarcely tell one note from another, marched up to the piano and laboriously picked out "Yankee Doodle" with one finger. This was vigorously applauded, but she refused to answer to her encore, so Number Six was called upon to give an exhibition with Indian clubs. Supplied with two golf sticks, Myra Haskell executed some truly thrilling stunts for such a short notice, and nearly succeeded in executing her audience also. As each number on the program must occupy five minutes, the

girls became quite expert in the art of dodging, and were decidedly breathless before the time limit relieved their Amazon of her war-clubs, and they were permitted to resume their seats once more.

Then Number Nine was bidden to entertain them with a reading; and Tabitha, more fortunate than her mates in being called upon for something she could do, recited a comical selection, which so captivated her audience that twice they brought her back with their applause. But the third time she insisted that it was someone else's turn, and Miss Cornwall sustained her. So the program of fun and laughter continued.

"Number Four, go to the blackboard."

Gloriana gave a start of surprise, for in her keen enjoyment of the novel proceedings, she had almost forgotten that she must do her part. But she obeyed the command promptly, and stood waiting for further instructions.

"Draw a square, a triangle, a heart and a circle," continued the teacher's voice.

The girl quickly sketched the figures named.

"Now turn them into caricatures of notable people."

"Whee! I'm glad that wasn't my fate," exclaimed Myra, who considered that she had acquitted herself admirably, and was now enjoying her opportunity of making sport of her mates' attempts.

But Gloriana, after an instant's hesitation, turned her back to the audience again, gripped her crayon more firmly, and attacked the square. A few deft strokes transformed the harsh lines into a striking likeness of Miss Cornwall herself; the triangle became peaked-faced Miss Jeremy; the heart was made to resemble the beloved principal of Ivy Hall, and the circle blossomed into the cherubic features of Miss Summers, who was so very young-looking that she was often mistaken for a pupil of the school. As the first roughly outlined geometrical figure took on the likeness of a human face, the girls giggled their surprise, then gasped at the artist's audacity, and finally burst into a deafening shout of laughter and applause, when, below the crude, but unmistakable caricatures the busy crayon scrawled these words, "Notables of Ivy Hall."

Gloriana, flushed, abashed at such a reception, yet with a gleam of triumph in her eyes,

bowed gravely, and started for her seat; but pandemonium had broken loose, and the girls flocked around her, clamoring all at once, "Draw some more! Make a picture of Madame! Give us a sketch of Miss White! Draw some of the girls—Ishimato—the gardner—"

Back to the blackboard they pushed her, thrust the chalk into her hand, and breathlessly watched the swift lines grow into the familiar faces they demanded.

"How do you do it?" sighed Bessie Jorris, who aspired to be an illustrator some day, but found the preparation both tedious and discouraging.

"I didn't know you could draw," murmured astonished Tabitha.

"Why didn't you let us know before?" reproached Clara, secretly wishing she had been more friendly to this talented personage, who had so suddenly sprung into popularity.

"You never asked me," answered Gloriana, sweetly, with such a comically patronizing glance at her questioners that Miss Cornwall inwardly chuckled, and the girls blushed uncomfortably.

At that moment the dinner-bell sounded its summons, and further words or pictures were forgotten in the rush to the dining-room and the scramble of preparation for the opera which followed the Japanese cook's bountiful repast.

"Where has the day flown to?" exclaimed Kate Magee, when warned as they left the hall below that not an hour remained in which to dress for the closing and most important event of their unique holiday.

"It *has* slipped by rather fast, hasn't it?" said Tabitha, casting a dismayed glance at the tall clock by the stairs, as they scampered past.

"I see where some of the slow-pokes have to do some hustling," added Myra, mounting the steps two at a time, and scuttling down the corridor, dragging Clara after her.

"I am glad it's gone," murmured Gloriana to Tabitha, her eyes shining with eager anticipation. "Not a minute of the whole day has dragged, and yet last evening I thought I couldn't wait for to-night to come."

"It did seem a long time to wait, didn't it?" agreed her room-mate, brushing the long, black hair with rapid strokes. "Yet I haven't

found time all day to lay out the things I intended wearing to-night, and it would have saved lots of bustling now. What dress shall you put on? Your blue?"

"No, my white."

"The blue is prettier."

"The white is simpler."

Tabitha smiled. It pleased her to see how naturally instinct led Gloriana to do the right thing or wear the right clothes, in spite of the fact that her education along this line had been woefully neglected.

"And you will wear my gray opera cloak, won't you?"

"Oh, Tabitha, I can't! Won't my brown coat do? Will all the girls wear opera cloaks?"

"Now don't get mad," her companion urged. "I've got two cloaks. Dad sent me one, and Uncle Decker gave me the other. I call them opera cloaks because they are both too light-colored for ordinary use, and I have never worn either one yet. It's perfectly proper, of course, for you to wear your brown if you prefer. Some of the girls have regular opera wraps, but most haven't any. I'd like

to lend you my gray, Glory. In fact, when Myra wanted to borrow it, I told her you were to wear it. Won't you, dear?"

"Did Myra really want to borrow your cloak when she has so many things herself?"

"Sure."

"Well, then—I don't care. It is lots daintier than my brown coat anyway. Are you going to take an umbrella?"

"Umbrella? What for?"

"It is so cloudy and threatening. I heard Miss Pomeroy say she was afraid it would rain before we got back."

"I suppose it might be well enough to go prepared, though I do hate to be bothered with such a thing as an umbrella."

"I will carry it for you," offered Gloriana, and as Tabitha was too much engrossed with the buckles of her pink slippers to make reply, the red-haired girl collected two umbrellas which she found stowed away in the closet, and hiding them under the folds of the lovely gray cape which Tabitha had slipped over her shoulders, she descended the stairs to join the girls waiting impatiently for the auto which was to take them to the opera house.

Nor was Gloriana disappointed when the great curtains rolled up and revealed to her gaze the wonderful pictures played out by wonderful people. The glitter of her surroundings dazzled her, the gorgeous scenery captivated her, and the music held her entranced. She hated to see the curtain fall, and was childishly pleased when it rose again on new scenes. The story she could but vaguely follow, yet there was not a movement on the stage that escaped her. It was as if she had been transported into fairy-land, only even better than she had dreamed.

Suddenly, as she hung breathlessly on the edge of her seat, waiting for the curtain to rise on the last act, she heard a woman's voice say sharply, "Mabel, what is the matter with you to-night? I don't believe you have seen a thing on the stage since the opera commenced. You've had your eyes glued on something else the whole time."

"Yes, mamma," answered a weary voice across the aisle and a little behind where the Ivy Hall girls were sitting. "I have been watching that lovely child in the end seat—the one with red hair. I've seen operas so often

that they don't interest me any longer, but you can read the whole story in the face of that girl. Isn't she sweet? What marvelous hair! Children always look so dear in white."

The girl with red hair! Gloriana's eyes stealthily swept across the audience in search of the red-haired child which had won such unstinted praise from the speaker, but could see no one answering the description in her vicinity. Curiously, she turned in her seat slightly and glanced back over her shoulder.

"There, mamma, she is looking this way," continued the world-weary belle's voice. "What beautiful eyes!"

"Well, I must say I don't admire your taste," answered the older woman grimly. "What do you call beautiful about that child? She is attractive, I admit; but beautiful—well, she is not my definition of beauty. I do wish you would pay attention to this opera. The singing is divine."

"So is that girl's face. I'd rather watch it."

Gloriana looked up at the speaker, and her lids dropped quickly, for both pair of eyes were fixed upon hers, and the younger woman

smiled as she intercepted the startled glance of the crippled girl. Could it be possible that they were speaking of her? She was occupying the end seat, she had red hair, and she was dressed in white. A curious flutter thrilled her whole being. Ugly Gloriana called lovely and attractive!

The young woman's next words left no doubt in her mind, for the ever-present crutch had just caught the speaker's eye, and she exclaimed in compassionate tones, "Why, she is lame, mamma! Oh, what a shame!"

The hot blood flew to Gloriana's cheeks, but fortunately for her embarrassment, the curtain rose at that instant, and every other thought was banished in her keen enjoyment of the closing act. "I am so sorry it has ended," she sighed, when the lights flashed up for the last time, and the audience began their hurried departure.

"Did you like it so much?" asked Tabitha, who had herself been too deeply absorbed in the music to notice anyone around her.

Before Gloriana could reply, Bessie suddenly called, "Oh, girls, it's raining!"

"How do you know?" demanded a dismayed chorus.

"Can't you hear it? Besides, that is what everyone ahead of us is saying. Aren't they, Miss Cornwall?"

"It is evidently storming," replied the instructor anxiously, surveying the slipper-clad feet of her charges as they slowly filed down the stairs. "You ought all to have brought your rubbers. Fortunately the auto is covered, so we will keep fairly dry after we're once inside."

"I've got two umbrellas," spoke up Gloriana, producing them from under the gray cape as she spoke. "We can take turns in going to the auto under these, and none of us will get wet."

"Wise girl," complimented the teacher, her deep frown of anxiety relaxing at sight of them. "Now we are fixed up all right. Here is our auto—you three smaller girls come along."

So following Gloriana's plan, the girls made hasty trips across the wet walk and curled themselves into as small a space as possible in-

side the great, covered car, and they set out at a lively speed along the slippery pavements for Ivy Hall.

A blinding flash of lightning suddenly tore open the heavens, and a crash of thunder pealed noisily overhead, startling the whole company, and making the more timid cower and shake, as Myra exclaimed, "A thunderstorm! Glory, but doesn't that sound nice? I always did like thunder, and I miss it like fury here in California. But I'm glad to know it can rattle some once in a while."

There was an ominous crack, a sudden lurch, a grinding of brakes, and their car came to a standstill under some dripping pepper trees, while their driver cursed his luck in no uncertain terms.

"Tire blown up, I'll bet," cried Myra, who was never known to be overwhelmed by any situation. "Here's where we have to walk. Better take off your shoes and stockings, girls. You will at least save your slippers."

"Myra, be still," admonished Miss Cornwall, poking her head out from under the canopy to inquire of the chauffeur, "What seems to be the matter?"

"Axle bu'sted," was the laconic reply.

"Axle?"

"Yes, mum."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"What *can* I do about it?" he demanded indignantly. "*I* can't fix it. You will have to beat it for the street-car, or else walk the rest of the way home, s'far as I can see."

"Oh, mercy!" groaned Gwynne, feeling of her white satin slippers, and mentally picturing the ruin the wet pavements would make of them. "Why didn't I wear my patent leathers? They wouldn't spoil with the first soaking."

"Gracious!" exclaimed scared Kate as another prolonged peal of thunder seemed fairly to shake the earth, "I wish I hadn't come."

"This is no time for wishing," said Miss Cornwall, sharply. "Just get your belongings together and pile out of here as fast as possible. The auto can't be repaired to-night and the nearest car-line is three blocks away. Luckily, there are trees most of the distance, and that will break the rain a little. Here, Mercedes, Isabel and Clara, wrap this lap-robe around you. It is better than nothing at all.

Myra, take this other robe and share it with two more girls. Then with the umbrellas the rest of us will get along nicely."

"But how awful we'll look," demurred Clara, hesitating.

"What are looks a night like this?" demanded the teacher, laughing in spite of herself as the queer procession filed under the flickering light of a street-lamp. "Get under that robe and march along. We are in a pretty box, I admit, but we must make the best of it."

"That's right," agreed Myra heartily, nearly capsizing Tabitha as she swung the damp, heavy blanket over the black head. "Let's play we are ducks. We might as well enjoy ourselves as we splash along. What larks we—"

"Sakes alive! What was that?" chorused the leading blanketted trio, stopping so abruptly that the second group under the lap-robe canopy bumped violently into them.

"What was what?" demanded Bessie indignantly, for the impact had brought her to her knees in a puddle of water, and jerked the blanket free from Tabitha and Myra.

"It—it was something awful," quavered Clara.

"It had wings," supplemented Mercedes, "and flapped them right in my face."

"It squawked," whispered Isabel, through chattering teeth.

"I didn't see a thing," declared Tabitha.

"You kids imagined it," added Myra scornfully.

"Start on, you!" called Gwynne impatiently from the rear. "There is a car due in five minutes, and if we miss that we may have to walk home for sure. Why—what—oh—oh—oh—"

Out of the black shadows of the trees ahead came a series of hideous noises, voices calling, unearthly squawks, and huge, misshapen, awkward, lumbering forms bore down upon the terrified girls, who, shrieking and panic-stricken, abandoned lap-robes, umbrellas, everything, in their wild scramble for safety. Only Gloriana stood her ground. She said afterward that it was because she could not run; but however that may be, she gripped hard the handle of an umbrella which rolled past her as its owner cast it aside, and just as one of

the great, black shapes came tearing along toward her, she jabbed the dripping umbrella viciously at it, and cried, "Shoo!"

The result was laughable as well as unexpected. The huge thing stopped so short in its headlong flight that it lost its balance, turned a summersault on the wet sidewalk, and with squawks of absolute terror, rushed back in the direction it had come from, straight into the arms of a panting man, who was evidently in pursuit.

"Oho!" he exulted as he made it captive. "Got you, didn't I!"

"Wh-at is it?" gasped poor Gloriana from the darkness.

"Who are you?" demanded the astonished man in turn, perceiving for the first time the little figure dimly outlined under the dripping trees.

"I'm from Ivy Hall," she quavered. "The rest of the girls were so frightened I think they ran away. They—we—I didn't know what was loose."

He laughed grimly. "The park ostriches got scared at the thunder and broke out of their pen," he explained. "I am one of the

keepers. They are fool birds and make no end of trouble. About six others got loose, and they're streaking it toward town, as tight as they can gallop. This was the last in the bunch. You are safe now to run along with the rest of your crowd."

And he departed with his captive, leaving Gloriana to gather up as much of the discarded property as she could find in the dark, and hobble on her way to join her mates. She found them returning for her, led by Miss Cornwall, who was thoroughly ashamed of her undignified flight and anxious to retrieve her reputation.

"My child!" she exclaimed in great relief at sight of the limping figure laden down with the lap-robes and two umbrellas, both still open, "are you hurt?"

"Only scared," she replied with naïve frankness. "One ostrich was bound to run over me."

"Ostriches!" echoed the girls. "Was *that* what they were?"

"Yes. They don't like thunder any better than Clara does, so they broke loose and ran away."

"Oh!"

"I hear the car," shouted Myra from the corner. "Hurry, hurry, hurry!"

And the crestfallen party broke into a mad run, glad of the chance to cover their confusion and chagrin.

CHAPTER IX

GLORIANA'S CHRISTMAS GIFTS

"What are you making, Tabitha?"

"Rose beads," answered the girl addressed, without looking up from her messy task of grinding crimson rose petals into a great iron pan.

"Can you make really, truly beads out of that wet stuff?" asked Gloriana incredulously.

"This paper says so. They are all the rage now and I thought I would make a few for the novelty of it."

"For Christmas?"

"Yes."

Silence fell, and for some minutes the crippled girl watched with fascinated eyes the stream of purple pulp dropping unevenly into the pan. Then she ventured to ask timidly, "Do *all* the girls always give something to the rest?"

"Oh, it's not as bad as that!" laughed Tabitha. "We *couldn't* remember every pupil ex-

cept by picture postcards or something like that. It would be too expensive. We'd all go bankrupt. The teachers won't accept any gift from a scholar if it costs more than two bits, and there is a rule here that no girl can borrow money for Christmas things. She must spend only what she has herself."

"Supposing she hasn't *anything* to spend."

Tabitha was startled. How well she remembered her own dilemma of a year ago when she had five dollars with which to buy something like twenty-five presents, and she had thought herself poor. Here was Gloriana without a cent. How could she have overlooked that fact? What could she do to supply the want? Rapidly she pondered the question.

December with its subtle, mysterious air was already two days old, and the atmosphere of the whole school had of a sudden become charged with secrets, so that even Gloriana, unaccustomed as she was to such celebrations of the Christmastide, felt the undercurrent of pleasant mystery, and naturally longed to share in it. Tabitha's monthly allowance had reached her that very day, and to her surprise

and delight it was just twice the usual amount; but she could not offer her proud room-mate money. Such a suggestion would be promptly and scornfully spurned. Gloriana's pride was not to be treated lightly. How was she to get around the barrier?

As if in answer to her unspoken question, Gloriana suddenly remarked, "I should think you would like to work with rose petals. They are so sweet."

"They are awfully wet and nasty to handle when they are ground up," answered Tabitha, pressing another handful of the juicy pulp back into the feeder, "and it's a long job. I am sick of it already. Half believe I'll throw this stuff out and not bother with it." She paused irresolutely in her task of grinding and scowled darkly at the iron pan. She was a good actor.

"Oh, don't!" begged Gloriana in alarm. "I want to see what they are like when they are done; and besides—the girls will be glad to get them."

"I wasn't planning many of them for the girls," replied Tabitha. "I wanted some for Carrie and Mrs. Vane and Aunt Maria, and

Mercedes and Chrystobel—that's about all. But grinding these petals fifteen times a day for nine days is no joke. This is only the second time through."

"Let me help," begged Gloriana, seeing another opportunity for paying off part of her debt to the black-eyed girl who had befriended her. "I'd love to, really."

"Would you, Glory?" Tabitha successfully feigned a look of incredulous surprise, as if Gloriana's offer were not exactly what she had been working for.

"Try me and see."

"Well—if you want to, I don't care, and you can have half the beads for your trouble."

"Oh, no, I don't want them. I mean—that wouldn't be fair to you."

"It wouldn't be fair any other way, and you will have to take them or you can't grind for me."

"Well, then, I will. When shall I begin—now?"

Another inspiration seized the crafty Tabitha. "I have heard that it takes quarts of petals to make a few beads," she gently insinuated. "You might go down to the garden

and see if you can find some more full-blown roses. Miss Pomeroy said we might have all we could get from the bushes. It isn't a real good season for bead-making now because there are so few roses in blossom. Still there are quite a few."

Gloriana waited only for instructions as to what petals to pull, and bounded away with hope singing in her heart. And for the next two weeks no galley-slave could have been more faithful to his task. Early and late she worked, grinding and re-grinding the ever-changing mass until her arms and back ached, and the pulp was smooth and black. Then came the shaping of the stuff into beads, piercing them with hatpins, drying, polishing and stringing them,—a tedious, fatiguing job.

But at length their labor was ended, and Gloriana stood exulting over the shining black strands as they lay in the table drawer. "Ten hundred and fifty-nine, Tabitha, think of it! That will make twenty-one nice strings, or twenty a bit longer. Aren't they pretty? I am so proud I helped make them! Shall we divide them now?"

Tabitha had planned on counting the beads

first herself, that she might give Gloriana the greater share of them, but as the lame girl had beaten her to it, she had to submit with what grace she might when her companion laid ten long strands in her lap and carried away the other ten for her own use.

Then Gloriana seemed suddenly to lose all interest in Christmas presents. She avoided the mysterious groups which stole from room to room with bundles of ribbon and lace hidden under tiny sewing aprons. She even avoided Tabitha as studiously as the rest, and in response to all her room-mate's inquiries, answered, "I must put more time on my lessons."

As luck would have it, the girls were so interested in their own pursuits that they did not bother much about what Gloriana was doing, and that ingenious young damsel had every opportunity she desired to perfect certain little plans of her own for the Christmastide. Hidden away by herself with scissors, paste-pot, discarded boxes of all descriptions and scraps of tissue paper and baby-ribbon, hoarded ever since her Ivy Hall days began, she fashioned dozens of the oddest yet most

attractive candy-boxes that the girls had ever seen, and hid them away one by one in a tiny dark closet under the stairs, long ago vacated because of its small dimensions and inconvenient location.

She thought them safe there, for it was only by chance that she had found the musty retreat one day when Cassandra had taunted her beyond endurance, and she had sought an isolated spot where she could sob out her grief and anger. Since then she had often stolen away to its cool darkness in moments of sorrow or gladness to be alone with her thoughts. As no one ever found her there, or even seemed to know of the closet's existence, she concluded that no one else had discovered it. But in this she was mistaken.

Tabitha had found the tiny recess the first year of her study at Ivy Hall, but had almost forgotten about it until the naughty Cassandra ferreted out some of her choicest Christmas secrets, and in searching for a new hiding-place, she had recalled the little nook under the stairs.

"No one else knows about it," she told herself gleefully. "I'll stow away my things

there, and Cassie can hunt all she pleases. The little minx! She has no business going through our rooms like that, and though I hate tattletales, I shall certainly tattle if she doesn't quit it."

Piling up her hoard of treasures in her lap, she departed stealthily on her mission late one afternoon when she thought the other girls were too busy behind locked doors to notice her movements. She encountered no one on her way, and with a relieved sigh slipped into the closet, leaving the door behind her open just a crack. Then, with nervous, trembling hands, she hastily began stowing away on one of the topmost shelves the daintily wrapped parcels she had brought in her apron. But as she pushed the third package after its mates, her hand came in contact with something soft and pliable which crackled faintly under her touch. Surprised, she carefully felt of the object, then carried it to the door to examine her find, and was amazed to see a curious little paper horn dangling from her fingers.

"A candy-box!" she whispered. "How came it here? Why, it looks like Gloriana's work! I do believe it is. Everybody would

know that was little Isabel's picture. I wonder—"

Hurriedly she ran her hand over the rest of the shelves and swept a whole armful of the frail boxes into her lap, forgetting in her marvel at their odd quaintness that she was prying into some other girl's secrets just as Cassandra had done into hers.

"Why, they are the cutest things I have seen in a long time," she mused. "Each one has the sketch of some girl on it—the person she intends it for, I suppose. Wonder if there is one for—"

"Kitty Catt, what are you doing here?" demanded a shrill voice behind her, and Grace Tilton, with Jessie and Julia in tow, threw wide the closet door, revealing the guilty Tabitha and her plunder.

"Oh, girls," she gasped, realizing for the first time that she had been playing the part of Poll Pry, "you scared me out of a year's growth. You've caught me meddling."

"What *cunning* boxes!" interrupted Jessie, pouncing upon a gorgeous red one, which bore on one side a laughable sketch of Myra with her golf-stick Indian clubs, imperfectly drawn

yet so like the real girl in expression and attitude that involuntarily one had to smile at the picture. "Did you make these darling things?"

"Sh! No. I wish I could draw like that. I found them here when I came to hide away some of my Christmas presents so Cassandra wouldn't find them again."

Grace giggled. "That's what we came for, too."

"Oh, dear! And I thought no one in the school would ever think of this place," cried Tabitha dismayed.

"So did we," chorused the trio.

"Miss King told us about it when she found us hiding things in our desks in the domestic science room," explained Julia, "and said she was sure it wasn't being used for anything now. In this out-of-way corner we thought no one else would ever investigate."

"What geese we are!"

"Whose boxes are these if they don't belong to you?" asked Jessie, curiously examining one with the likeness of spoiled Cassandra on it.

"Can you keep a secret?"

"Bet we can."

"And never let on that you knew anything about them beforehand?"

"Sure. Don't keep us waiting. Someone will find us here and then everybody will know."

"Well, I suspect Gloriana made them."

"Oh, Glory!" exploded Grace. "But here is one for Cassandra. At least, it has her picture on it."

"She has made one for every girl in school, I guess. I never meant to peek, but I was so surprised to find the shelves full of stuff that I started to investigate, and then you came along. Help me put them back and get my things out of here before we are caught."

"How do you know Gloriana made them?" persisted Julia skeptically. "I never dreamed she could do such things."

"Looks like her drawing, doesn't it?"

"Y-es."

"That's how I know. That, and because of some questions she asked me a while ago about Christmas."

Briefly she told her story as she repacked her belongings and carefully laid away the candy-boxes on their shelves; and the quartette

departed as stealthily as they had come. Once in Tabitha's room, however, their tongues were loosened. Gloriana was absent, and with their heads close together, they plotted a sweet revenge.

"Maybe some of the girls will object," suggested Julia doubtfully.

"Not many of them, I am sure," Grace declared.

"We won't care if one or two don't want to join us, but we must interest the majority," said Tabitha.

"I am awfully glad I had already planned something real nice for her," breathed Julia. "I was so hateful to her at first—"

"We all were," said Grace frankly.

"I didn't mean to be," interposed Julia in haste. "But I made fun of her instead of being friendly; and she is such a dear, once you know her."

"Then it is agreed?"

"Aye, aye, Captain," responded the girls as with one voice. "We'll give her a Christmas that she will never forget."

And with elaborate ceremony, they clasped hands to make the vow more binding.

CHAPTER X

THE TOWER SPOOK

"Girls, such a calamity!" Gwynne burst breathlessly into Bessie's room where an even dozen of the older girls were seated squaw fashion on beds and floor, as they industriously stitched away on Christmas things, and listened while Myra dramatically read the next day's history lesson aloud.

"What *is* a calamity?" asked Clara, accenting the wrong word, as she tried to untangle a snarly skein of silk.

"A calamity is a direful occurrence, a terrible disaster, a woeful misfortune," replied Myra glibly. "I had the calamity to misspell that word in English Composition once upon a time, and must needs be punished by having to hunt it up in Uncle Dick, and write it, together with a comprehensive definition, ten times on the blackboard."

"Oh, Myra, hush!" cried Julia, tossing a bonbon into the historian's mouth as the only

effectual way of silencing her. *"What* is a calamity, Gwynne? Has something dreadful happened?"

"Birdie Hollister has an acute attack of tonsilitis, and the doctor says she can't hope to take her part in the cantata."

"Gwynne Ralston, you are fooling! Birdie was all right this morning."

"I know it, but her throat has been getting sore all day, and just a few minutes ago she gave up and went to the principal, who promptly packed her off to the infirmary with Nurse Nelson."

"But who will sing in her place? She had all the soprano solos!"

"Don't I know it? Didn't I say it was a calamity?"

"We *can't* give up the cantata," wailed Clara. "It's the prettiest one we ever had. Can't you take Birdie's part, Bessie?"

"Well, I should say not!" ejaculated that young lady, panic-stricken at the mere thought of such a thing. "I wouldn't take her solos for anything in the world!"

"But you are our only hope, Bess."

"Unless we could capture the tower spirit

and harness *her* voice," suggested Vera, with a nervous laugh.

"The tower spirit!" echoed the girls, looking from one to another with mystified eyes.

"Haven't you heard it yet?"

"Heard what?"

"Why, our ghost!"

"Vera, be sensible! What are you babbling about? Ivy Hall has no ghost—and never had."

"Well, I don't care, *something* or *someone* sings in the old bell tower every day," declared Vera seriously, somewhat nettled at the unbelieving glances and scornful tones of her comrades. "Isn't that so, Madeline?"

Madeline nodded vigorously as she bit off a length of thread and thrust it through the eye of her needle.

"How long since?"

"About a week."

"Why didn't you say something about it before, then?" demanded Myra, who had a decided fancy for ghosts.

"We—we thought at first it was just our imagination playing us tricks and you would laugh at us, for the music was so soft that we

could catch only snatches of it at times. Then we wondered if some of you had hatched up a joke to scare us. You know how it tells in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of the broken bottle that was arranged in the attic so the wind whistled through and made it sound like the howl of demons—"

"Is that what this sounds like?" whispered timid Clara, shivering and looking about her apprehensively.

"No, indeed. This is lovely music. Awfully pretty, but pretty music can be made from broken bottles, too."

"Or it might be a lute hanging in the wind somewhere, like Miss Alcott writes about in one of her books," suggested Gwynne thoughtfully.

"Anyway," continued Vera, "we thought we would wait a bit before reporting, and see if some of the other girls didn't hear it, too, for each day it seems to get a little louder."

"None of the rest of us have rooms under the tower," interrupted Tabitha. "If that is the haunt of the singing spook, the rest of us wouldn't be apt to hear the music, unless it was very loud. When does it sing—at night?"

"No, that's the funny part of it. We never hear it except during the afternoon."

"Whoever heard tell of a daytime ghost?" scoffed Myra, disappointed at this turn of the story.

"What does it sing?" asked Clara, with a little more courage in her voice.

"Our—our cantata music, mostly."

The girls looked incredulous, yet relieved, and Myra laughed scornfully, "That's a clever hoax, girls, but it won't work. It is Birdie practicing her part, and you knew it all the time."

"It is no such thing!" cried Vera and Madeline in unison. "We asked Birdie about it and she says Miss White always has her practice in the music-room. Besides—it isn't Birdie's voice."

"It is clearer and sweeter," added Madeline.

"Let Birdie hear you say that once, and your goose would be cooked," jeered the doubting Myra.

"Well, you just come up to our room and listen for yourselves," spluttered indignant Vera, snatching up her sewing and starting

for the door. "You think we are fooling, but we're not. We are in dead earnest."

"Wh-y—wh-y—is it singing now?" stammered Grace, aghast, while the faces of the whole group blanched, and their knees beat a tattoo on the floor.

"Yes, it is,—that is, it was when we came down here to Bessie's room."

"That's why we came," confessed Madeline.

"It got on our nerves—the spookiness of it," added Vera, apologetically. "Are you coming, any of you?"

"I am," declared Myra promptly.

"And I," said Tabitha.

Unwilling to be thought cowards, even under such unusual circumstances, the whole group of girls caught up their materials and with chattering teeth and trembling limbs, filed softly up the stairway to the "tower room," as the two occupants of that apartment called their third-story room, because it was the only one in the square cupola which adorned one corner of the dormitory building. Owing to its isolated position, it was the most sought-after room in the school and had been the scene of many a midnight revel, until the

argus-eyed Miss Jeremy was given charge of the third floor, when all such forms of amusement were promptly squelched.

"Huh!" said Myra, as they stealthily entered the room and stood listening with bated breath for the mysterious song which had so disturbed the peace of Vera and Madeline. "I don't hear a sound."

"There *ain't* a sound," declared Clara, venturing inside the door and drawing the first free breath she had drawn since the word "ghost" had sent icy chills up and down her spine. "It's all a joke. I knew it would be."

"There doesn't seem to be any singing just now, does there?" said Vera lamely, and with such a comical look of disappointment in her face that Tabitha was tempted to laugh.

"Hark!" admonished Gwynne. Clara stepped out into the hall again.

"Yes, that's it!" exclaimed Madeline eagerly. "Do you think we are joking now?"

Softly, indistinctly, strains of sweet music stole through the quiet room, where the dropping of a pin could easily have been heard, as the girls strained their ears to catch every sound of the mysterious voice. For all agreed

that it was a *voice,* whether human or ghostly.

"Doesn't it—ever—get any—louder?" chattered Jessie, with lips so cold and stiff that she could hardly speak.

"Oh, yes, often! It's growing clearer now." Even as Vera spoke, the notes became plainly audible, and Myra was forced to admit that Birdie Hollister could not hope to compete with the uncanny voice floating downward from the old, disused bell tower.

"What do you make of it?" whispered Gwynne uneasily.

"Hush!" commanded Tabitha, cocking her head on one side and listening intently. The words, more sharply defined now, sounded very familiar. Suddenly the tense figure relaxed, Tabitha smiled gleefully, and softly chanted in measure with the singer:

"'If you are too weak to journey
Up the mountain steep and high,
You can stand within the valley
Where the multitudes go by.
You can chant in happy measure,
As they slowly pass along;
Though they may forget the singer,
They will not forget the song.'"

"Who is it? You know?" they asked.

Tabitha nodded.

"Tell us quick! We are dying to hear."

"Guess!"

"Madame."

The girl from Silver Bow clapped her hand over her mouth to prevent an explosion of laughter. "Whoever would think of Madame?"

"But she sings. I have heard her!" maintained Jessie stoutly.

"She can't sing straight English any better than she can talk it. Guess again."

"Give it up," declared Myra. "Haven't an idea, but I am half dead with suspense. Who is it? One of the girls here at school?"

"Glory!"

"Gloriana Holliday?"

"Yes!"

"I don't believe it!"

"I'll show you, then. Come on!"

Wonderingly they followed down the stairs, along the hall and through a dark, musty passage to the foot of a ladder nailed perpendicularly against the wall. The darkness of their surroundings made it necessary for them to

feel their way slowly, but Tabitha was evidently familiar with the place, and when the ladder was reached, she struck a match and revealed to the astonished girls one long crutch leaning against the rungs.

"But how can *she* climb that ladder? She is lame."

"I don't know how she does it," Tabitha acknowledged, "but she has told me about climbing trees, and if she can do that, I should think she might mount a ladder."

"I didn't know she could sing," whispered Vera, still unconvinced.

"Nor I, but that is her voice, and the words of that song she learned from me."

"Let's go up and surprise her," suggested irrepressible Myra.

"Don't you do it!" cried Tabitha in alarm. "It wouldn't be nice of us, and she would think we had been spying on her. Come on away. It's against the rules to go up there, anyway."

"Then what is she doing there?"

"I suppose she knows. Let's go back to our sewing. We have only a little time left, and now that the mystery of the tower spook is solved—"

"She can take Birdie's place in the cantata," finished Gwynne exultantly, "and our Christmas program is saved. I am going to tell Miss White this very minute. She was nearly distracted at the doctor's verdict."

Away she sped with dancing feet, and the rest of the group returned to their neglected work, still talking of their strange discovery.

CHAPTER XI

HOLIDAYS IN SILVER BOW

"Kitty, Kitty, Kitty, let me in! Oh, the door isn't locked after all. It must have stuck, I guess. Think what has happened! Here is a letter from mamma telling me to bring you home with me for the holidays. Say you will go! Please don't disappoint us. I know the invitation is rather late when school closes day after to-morrow, but—why, hello, girls! I didn't see you before." Jessie's rapid, excited speech came to an abrupt end at the sound of a hearty laugh from Tabitha's bed, where Madeline, Gwynne and Grace were curled in fantastic attitudes, and she faced them in startled surprise.

"That's very evident," giggled Madeline. "Oh, it's too funny! Come line up here with us, curly-pate. You are the fourth already this afternoon. How many more will there be, Kitty Catt? Can't you give us the secret of such popularity?"

"What *are* you talking about?" demanded Jessie, bewildered and a trifle indignant at her reception. "I came to ask Kitty if she wouldn't go home with me for the holidays—"

"So did we all of us," chimed in the trio.

"And she said she couldn't and she wouldn't and she mustn't and she daren't," chanted Gwynne, taking naughty satisfaction in the fact that though Tabitha had refused her invitation to spend the holidays with the Ralstons, she had also turned a deaf ear to the pleadings of all the other would-be hostesses.

"Oh, girls," expostulated Tabitha, looking distressed, "I didn't say that! I said I couldn't accept *any* invitation for the holidays this year."

"Why not?" asked Jessie, sorely disappointed.

"Because I am going home myself."

"To Silver Bow?"

"Yes."

"But will there be anyone there?"

Gwynne laughed mockingly. "Do you suppose she would go back to a people-less town?"

"You know I didn't mean that!" Jessie

stamped her foot in vexation. "Only I thought your aunt wasn't there any more at all and your father hardly ever, Kitty. It would be kind of lonely just at Christmas time, wouldn't it? Particularly with the Carsons gone, too."

"Oh, daddy will be home for a week, he says; and I am taking Gloriana with me."

"Oh!"

Tabitha flushed at the intonation of that very expressive monosyllable. But then how could they know that personally she would much rather have accepted some of the invitations extended to her by her schoolmates than to spend the blithe holiday season in the dreary desert town with only Gloriana for a companion—for her father was not apt to spend many hours at a time in the little cottage among the mountains? The lure of the hills was too great to be resisted long. Tom, away at an eastern college, could not come home for Christmas; the Vanes and the Carsons were gone from Silver Bow. For her the picture held few attractive features. Yet how could she explain to the girls her reason for refusing their invitations in order to spend

ten days on the desert? How could she tell them that her decision in the matter had been reached when she unexpectedly had come upon Gloriana, sitting dejected and forlorn by the window, staring with homesick eyes toward the foothills where Granny Conover's weather-beaten little cottage lay.

"No," she had answered in response to Tabitha's questions, she was not homesick for Manchester. She should like to catch a glimpse of the tiny old lady who had befriended her when no one else would take her in, but she had no desire to go back there to live any sooner than she positively must. No, her homesickness was for the home she did not have. It was so hard to see other girls preparing to join their families for the holidays, and to know that no family or friends waited to welcome her. It was a terrible thing to be a "left-out" in the world's pleasures, especially in the Yuletide plans and joys.

And suddenly, vividly, Tabitha recalled her Christmas of a year ago; how lonely she had felt when the girls discussed how they should spend the vacation hours; how she had envied them their happy homes; how she had longed

to be one of them; and then what a beautiful surprise the girls had given her, the loads of presents, the sacrifice of their own good times for her pleasure, the golden minutes planned just for her special benefit—all because they suspected her loneliness, and sympathized with her unhappy lot.

Here was a soul even less fortunate than herself, one who had no home except that offered by a poor old crone who could ill afford to take her in, one who had no family, no friends,—poor little orphan waif! So Tabitha had written a hurried letter home asking for permission to bring the homeless cripple to Silver Bow for the holidays.

"I know you will think it would be better for us to stay here, even if we remained at Ivy Hall for vacation," she wrote. "But Gloriana has never been invited to go anywhere since she came here, and she would be immensely tickled to receive such an invitation, even if it did mean ten days on the desert in the winter time."

Nor was Tabitha mistaken. Gloriana was perfectly radiant at the mere thought of going home with one of the girls for the brief

holiday season, and the pathetic sight of her pleasure fully repaid Tabitha for her sacrifice, though she could not help dwelling a little on the joys she had missed in refusing the invitations extended to her by the other pupils. Happily, the hours before their departure for Silver Bow were short, and filled to the brim with work and lessons, so there was little opportunity for vain regrets. As usual, studies suffered with the approach of Christmas, but the very air seemed so charged with the spirit of the season that even the most exacting teachers were lenient with the shortcomings of their scholars, and actually assigned shorter lessons that last week. I really believe these grown-up people welcome the Yuletide with as much eagerness as do the children of the land. At any rate, smiles and good cheer are the countersign of the season, and everyone at Ivy Hall was glad when the day of flitting came.

Gloriana was fairly transported with joy. Never in all her starved life before had she tasted such happiness. "Tabitha," she whispered in awed tones, standing beside her bed heaped with packages addressed only to her, "are all these really mine? I can't believe

it! Why, there is something from every girl in the school—even Cassandra. And I said they hated me!"

"You see you were mistaken," answered her room-mate, trying to cram another dress into her already over-packed suitcase, and rejoicing that she and her three sister conspirators had succeeded so well in interesting the girls in Gloriana's Christmas. "Have you got everything sorted out which you want to take with you?"

"Yes, in this chair. I will attend to them in a minute. I want to take another peep at the lovely collar Grace gave me."

Tabitha smiled in sympathy. She herself had paused frequently during the process of packing to gloat over the lovely gifts which had fallen to her lot this year, but time was getting short; so she quietly gathered up Gloriana's orderly array of belongings and packed them herself in the spandy-new satchel which had come among the crippled girl's numerous packages.

"There!" she chirped blithely, as she rose from her self-appointed task, "everything is all ready now. You have just long enough to

put away all those parcels on your bed before it is time to start."

"Gracious!" Gloriana exclaimed in contrition. "Have you packed up my traps? I didn't mean to shirk my duty. I'll be ready in a jiffy."

Rapidly the interesting articles were whisked out of sight in closet and dresser; hat and jacket were jerked on; and almost before she knew it, the lame girl found herself seated beside Tabitha in the school bus, on the way to the station. Six other girls accompanied them as far as the depot, but their train pulled out first, and they climbed aboard amid frantic handkerchief waving and the enthusiastic farewells of their mates, shouted above the turmoil of noisy engines and clanging bells.

Just as Tabitha mounted the last step, Joe, the errand boy at Ivy Hall, rushed breathlessly up and thrust a yellow envelope into her hand, panting out, "Miss Pomeroy said be sure you got this!"

"Thank you," she answered, mechanically closing her fingers over the paper. "Good-bye, Julia; good-bye, Miss White! Merry

Christmas to you all! Don't forget to come back after New Years!"

The train began a heavy puff, puff, and slowly moved out of the station yard, while the girls found their section and settled down to enjoy the first part of their journey. Not until then did Tabitha find time to examine the message Miss Pomeroy had sent her; but now, pulling the paper from her glove where she had thrust it for safe-keeping, she was conscience-stricken to discover that it was a telegram she held.

"Why in the world didn't he tell me?" she muttered, glancing anxiously at her companion to see if her movements were observed. But Gloriana's face was glued to the glass, as she eagerly watched the fleeting landscape, and Tabitha softly tore open the envelope. Her eyes took in the brief message at a glance, and involuntarily she gasped in consternation.

"What is it?" cried Gloriana, turning in time to catch a glimpse of the tragic face.

"Oh, nothing much," she fibbed, calculating rapidly. "I just thought of something. It doesn't matter." And slipping the crumpled

wad under her hand-bag, she turned her attention to the racing scenery. But at the first opportunity which offered itself, she smoothed out the paper carefully and once more scanned the disconcerting words:

"Can't be home for Christmas. Make other plans for friend.

"L. M. Catt."

What could she do about it? 'Twas now too late to turn back, and besides, how disappointed Gloriana would be! No, they must go on to Silver Bow. Miss Davis, the little dressmaker, would stay with them nights; but how in the wide world would she alone entertain Gloriana for ten whole days on the desert in winter? She had counted so much on coaxing her father to take them through the Silver Legion Mines, to introduce them to his own claims now paying so well, to drive them down to the Colorado River, across the boundary into Arizona, and to explore with them the mysteries of the Canyon not many miles from Silver Bow. She had planned burro rides about the country in all directions, but now her father would not be there to guide them,

and all this part of the program must be abandoned. What could they do to amuse themselves instead?

Their tiny cabin held little of interest to help pass away the long hours, and few of her most intimate friends were in town it seemed. The Vanes had long since returned to their Colorado home, the Carsons were in Boston, and the McKittricks were having a spell of bad luck which would make it an intrusion if the girls visited there often. Well, perhaps the way out of the difficulty would appear when once they had reached Silver Bow. At least, it would not help matters to worry about it. Resolutely Tabitha put her troubles behind her and turned her attention to Gloriana and dinner, which the porter was announcing in stentorian tones as he stalked majestically through the car.

Miss Davis very willingly came to their aid when Tabitha confessed the dilemma in which her father's telegram had placed her, and not only played guardian for them nights, but thought up many unique and wonderful ways of spending the waking hours; so that before the girls realized it, their vacation was gone.

"Why, to-morrow is New Year's Day!" cried Tabitha in genuine amazement. "I can't believe this is the last day of the old year. To-night is the time the prospectors jump claims. I—"

"Jump claims?" repeated Gloriana, knitting her brow in perplexity. "What do you mean by that?"

"Why, when a man locates a claim, he has to do a certain amount of work on it each year, and if all the work isn't done and his notices properly posted, and everything else necessary attended to, other folks can file on it and take it away from him."

"Is that what they are going to do with Mr. McKittrick's claims?"

"Who?" demanded Tabitha in surprise.

"While we were in the post-office to-day, I was standing close to a couple of men who were talking about jumping Mr. McKittrick's claims. I think they called them the Juno Group."

"Yes, the Jupiter, Juno, Mars and Mercury are his. I named them. What did they say?"

"Why—they are going to do something to-

night. They spoke about meeting somewhere and taking some trail. I don't remember just what they did say. I shouldn't have thought of it at all again if you hadn't spoken of jumping claims just now."

"I am mighty glad you did," returned Tabitha warmly. "It's a shame to take Mr. McKittrick's claims away from him just because he is hurt and can't finish the work this year. We must prevent it—that's what!"

"But what can we do? Just we girls?" demanded Gloriana bewildered at her companion's whirlwind decision.

"I really—don't—know," confessed the other slowly. "But I simply can't stand by and see someone defraud that man of the property he has worked so hard to make pay; not even if I have to go and jump those claims myself."

"You can't do that, can you?" cried Gloriana, aghast.

"No," Tabitha owned sadly. "I am not old enough, but—" a daring idea had at that instant taken shape under the black braids, but discretion warned her to say nothing about it, so she left her sentence unfinished.

"But what?" Gloriana scented some plan a-brewing.

"But I would if I could," replied Tabitha promptly, mentally patting herself on the back for having evaded that question so cleverly.

Gloriana said no more, but she noted every movement her friend made and every expression of her face; and when, after everyone was supposed to be asleep that night, Tabitha cautiously crept out of bed, dressed and stole from the house, Gloriana followed her stealthily, taking General, who usually spent his nights watching the empty Carson house. She tried to keep in sight of the flickering lantern which the daring Tabitha carried, but the night was inky black, and poor Gloriana, limping along with only one crutch over unfamiliar ground, found the journey difficult and wearisome. But with a courage born of desperation—she was afraid now to turn back—she continued up the steep, stony paths, down deep, precipitous banks, through heavy, shifting sand, or across smooth, storm-worn rocks, on—on—was there no end to this strange journey?

Just how far she had traveled she never knew, when suddenly out of the blackness ahead of her came the terrifying command, "Halt!" And she fancied that she heard the click of a revolver.

Quaking, horrified, frozen with despair, Gloriana halted, and for the first time discovered that the flickering lantern dancing like a will-o'-the-wisp in front of her had disappeared entirely, swallowed up in the night.

"Who goes there?" demanded an imperious voice, which, had Gloriana not been so frightened herself, she might have noticed was husky and quavering. General growled, but did not leave the cripple's side. "Speak, or I'll shoot!"

"Oh, it's just me—I—Gloriana Holliday! Please don't shoot! I just meant to follow Tabitha so she wouldn't come to harm. She oughtn't to be out alone on—"

"Glory!" interrupted an incredulous voice from the blackness. "Is it really you? Why, Glory, you shouldn't have come. It's a long way yet, and very rough. Oh, dear, what shall I do now?"

There was another faint click and the pale

light of a lantern flashed out of the night, revealing Tabitha's shadowy figure silhouetted against the starlit sky. Inwardly Gloriana quailed at the reproach in the girl's voice, but outwardly she maintained her composure and grimly declared, "March straight ahead wherever you were going. You needn't think I will go back home to-night until you go, too."

"But I am going now," Tabitha began, realizing that Gloriana could not return alone.

"Oh, but you're not!" coolly replied Gloriana. "You were bound for Mr. McKittrick's claims to-night, and I am here to help you save them if you can. March along, Captain! I don't know how you mean to do it, but *I* shan't stand back and let you face it alone." Her teeth were chattering from fright and cold, her feet ached from the long, stumbling journey, and her shoulder was weary with the rubbing of her crutch, but she put on such a brave front that Tabitha raised no further objections. In fact, she was more relieved than she cared to confess at the thought of having a companion on her lonely and perilous errand, but her comrade's crip-

pled condition troubled her. They had already been gone from the house more than an hour and there still remained half the journey to go. Midnight must be close at hand. Could they reach their goal in time? Could Gloriana hold out?

Then without warning, off to the left of the trail, a loud, hideous, wheezing, "He-haw-he-haw," awoke the echoes of the night, and the faint tinkle of a burro's bell sounded through the stillness. Gloriana, unprepared for such a racket so close at hand, uttered a terrified scream, leaped into the air, dropped her crutch, and stumbling over a jagged rock by the narrow roadway fell sprawling in the dust.

"Why, Glory!" cried Tabitha, more startled at her companion's frenzied yell than at the unexpected bray of the wandering beast. "That's only a burro. Wait here. I'm going to catch him."

And the girl once more disappeared in the darkness, leaving the much shaken and trembling Gloriana to pick herself up from the sharp gravel and nurse her own cuts and bruises. How Tabitha ever accomplished the task of catching the stray burro on the rocky

mountainside in that inky pall of midnight, Glory could never understand, but the flickering lantern had hardly bobbed out of sight among the rocks before it reappeared, and with it the older girl, leading a moth-eaten old burro by its scraggly mane.

"Climb up," she commanded briefly, halting beside the foot-sore girl.

"But you—what will you do?" demurred Glory, secretly afraid of the innocent-looking beast.

"Mount in front of you. It's getting late and we must hurry."

"Do you know where you are?" ventured Glory, as she struggled to an insecure seat on the burro's back.

"Of course," Tabitha laughed shortly. "I have often been here before. I know every post on the claims. You will never be able to stick in that position. Sit a-straddle. We'll have to, and it is really much more comfortable."

Getting her companion adjusted satisfactorily, Tabitha crawled up in front of her, and by dint of much coaxing, urged the beast into a smart pace along the rough road. After

what seemed hours to the uncomfortable girl behind her, clutching her waist with both hands, they came to an abrupt halt in a thick patch of greasewood, and Tabitha slid from her seat with an audible sigh. "It isn't quite midnight yet," she whispered. "No one is here ahead of us, thank goodness. We are in time. We'll have to turn this old beast loose, I guess, for he has no halter to tether him by. I took off his bell so it wouldn't betray us, but the rope is too short to do any good. Where is General? The traitor! I believe he has gone back home. Well, I know the way all right, but we'll have to trust to luck for a lift."

Speaking in cautious whispers as if fearful of being overheard, she led the way up a steep incline, and after a brief search, found a pile of rocks with a post set in the center, which bore a faded, tattered scrap of paper. "Here we are," she announced joyously. "Now for our wait. It is rather chilly here, isn't it?"

"I should say so!" chattered miserable Gloriana. "How long must we wait?"

"All night."

"All night!" Gloriana's voice was shrill with horror and unbelief.

"Sh! Someone may hear you. The claim-jumpers will be along directly, I reckon, for it is nearly midnight, and we must keep them off until day dawns."

"But we will freeze before that," wailed the other girl. "It is foolish to risk our lives—"

"The McKittricks have been awfully good to me. If I can keep his claims from being jumped until dad gets here, it's only my duty to do so," declared Tabitha grimly, but with such determination in her voice that Gloriana dared not remonstrate further. So she meekly inquired, "Won't your father get here till daybreak?"

"He can't. He is miles away. I telephoned when I ran down to the store for some bacon, but only Uncle Decker was there. So I told him that when dad came back to send him home at once, and he would find a note on the kitchen table, telling him what was the trouble. I couldn't explain over the phone without everyone hearing. But I know he will come. If only Mr. Carson had been here, all this fuss would never have happened, be-

cause he would have paid for the assessment work and looked after the claims until Mr. McKittrick was well again. This isn't much fun, is it?"

The winter winds were sharp with frost, and they had a full sweep down the mountain-side where the shivering girls were huddled. The darkness seemed to grow denser every minute. Tabitha had thought it wise to darken the lantern again, for fear its pale light might betray their presence to the would-be claim-jumpers; and the vastness of the black sea which engulfed them was appalling. They drew closer to each other in the scanty shelter of the rock heap, and shuddered at the lonely cry of the coyote on the surrounding hills, each longing for the warmth and peace of the little cottage at Silver Bow.

Even Tabitha was beginning to doubt the wisdom of their midnight trip, for no human being other than themselves seemed to be abroad that raw, gusty night. "I was a fool," she muttered to herself. "Very likely Gloriana misunderstood those men in the post-office. Surely no one in Silver Bow would hog the McKittrick claims while he is flat on his

back in bed. We've come on a wild-goose chase."

"Isn't it almost morning?" wheezed Gloriana, stiff with cold and fear.

"I am afraid not," answered Tabitha despairingly, suddenly seized with the awful thought that her companion was developing pneumonia. "Let's go back. I believe we have come on a fool's errand. No one else is stirring, and we are both catching cold."

"Sh!" hissed Gloriana, jabbing the other girl sharply in the ribs with her elbow. "There is a light—two of them—and they are coming this way."

Sure enough. Two uncertain, flickering dots of light were rapidly swinging up the trail toward their retreat, and instantly Tabitha was on her feet.

"Halt!" her voice rang metallically upon the frosty air. The lights stopped abruptly, then moved slowly on again.

"Stay where you are!" commanded the same harsh voice, wholly unlike Tabitha's usually gentle tones. "If you come another step I'll shoot!"

Once more the lights stopped, and an indistinct murmur of voices told the trembling girl that the men were in consultation. How long could she stand them off? Would her father never come? What would the claim-jumpers do to her when they discovered her pitiful ruse? Why had she been so foolish as to pit her puny strength against men grown?

Suddenly the lights went out, but the faint crackle of underbrush warned the girls that their enemies were approaching under cover of darkness. This was an unexpected move, and Tabitha's hand, gripping the old revolver like a vise, jerked convulsively. Crack! Her gun spit fire. Unintentionally she had pressed the trigger, and a bullet sang spitefully through the blackness.

"Ow! Jumping Moses!" yelled a scared voice from below, and the crackle of underbrush ceased. "Drop that gun, you fool! Are you aiming to commit murder?"

"Did you get hit, Joe?" anxiously inquired a second voice cautiously; but Tabitha's straining ears failed to catch the reply.

There was another brief period of consul-

tation, and then two voices demanded in unison, "Who are you up there, and what do you want?"

The interval had given Tabitha a chance to think, and fearful lest her voice should betray the fact that she was only a girl, she decided to evade speech so far as possible, so now she remained discreetly silent.

"Are you deaf?" called the men in some irritation.

Tabitha made no reply other than to cock her pistol, but that answer sufficed, and the men kept their distance. But contrary to Tabitha's hopes, they did not depart, and all night long the weary girl grasped her revolver with both hands and waited. Twice the men resorted to strategy, but both times her quick wits foiled them, and a menacing bullet warned them that she was in deadly earnest.

Then the sky began to brighten, the heavy darkness turned slowly into gray shadows, the stars grew paler, and Tabitha, with a sickening pounding of her heart, realized that day was beginning to dawn. The uneven battle would soon be over, her father had not come, and she could not hope to hold the claim when

her opponents discovered her youth. Indeed, they must have suspected all the time that something was amiss, else why had they tarried so long?

Just as she was debating whether or not she had better surrender before she was forced to do so, she heard the familiar bark of a dog in the distance, then once again—urgent, anxious, yet with a certain note of triumph in it that brought the blood to Tabitha's colorless cheeks and hope back into her heart.

"It's General," whispered Gloriana, wildly exultant.

"And he has brought someone with him," Tabitha rejoiced.

It was indeed General, faithful old fellow! And Mr. Catt, mounted on a foam-covered, exhausted horse, was at his heels. The dog tore up the mountainside in a frenzy of joy, leaped at the girls huddled behind the pile of rocks, and barked furiously.

"Daddy, O Daddy!" cried Tabitha, so relieved at sight of him that she straightway forgot the nearness of the claim-jumpers and flew out from her hiding-place in full view of them; for at sight of the excited rider, the

two men also had risen from their clump of greasewood and now came hurrying forward with lanterns alight.

"Tabitha! What is the meaning of this?" cried the elder Catt, springing from his saddle, and sweeping the slender figure off her feet.

"Catt!" exclaimed the exasperated men who had been foiled by a girl in their attempt to jump the McKittrick claims. "Explain yourself. Are you mixed up in this deal?"

Mr. Catt whirled about, glanced at the irate men, and burst out laughing. "McKittrick! By the great horn spoon!" he gasped out. "Say, this is rich! No, I am not mixed up in any claim-jumping deal whatever. I came in response to a message from my daughter, who was bound to save her friends' property if possible. Tabitha, someone has blundered. This gentleman is Hogan McKittrick, brother of our Silver Bow man, and he is here to protect Jim's rights—see that he gets a square deal—save his claims, in fact. He is not trying to steal the Juno Group, my girl."

Poor Tabitha! All night long she had guarded the McKittrick claims from another

McKittrick. The hot tears sprang to her eyes, and she could not suppress the quiver in her voice, as she bravely faltered, "I am sorry. I didn't understand. I thought you were trying to take this land away from Rosslyn's father, and I—couldn't bear—to have—him lose it."

"There, there, don't you fret!" answered the men cordially. "You have given us a night to remember, but we wouldn't have missed knowing such plucky girls for all the claims in Nevada. Three cheers for Miss Tabitha and her little friend!"

CHAPTER XII

THE REAL GHOST OF IVY HALL

"What is the matter, Grace?" asked Julia, peering over the top of her eye-glasses at her room-mate, rummaging distractedly through the dresser. "You have been pawing through that drawer for an hour. Lights out will ring before you've begun on your lessons if you don't look sharp. Have you lost something?"

"My purse," snapped Grace irritably, dumping the contents of the drawer onto the floor and beginning a systematic search of the chaos.

"What, again?" Julia's Latin lexicon slipped unheeded to the floor, as she studied with much concern the tumbled figure squatting on the rug.

"Yes, again. This is the third time within a week. Someone must like the feel of my money."

"Or else the style of your pocket-book,"

laughed Julia, for Grace's pet hobby was odd purses. "Was there much in it?"

"Not this time—only a quarter, I believe. My allowance hasn't come yet, but I owe Kitty that quarter and now it's gone. *Someone* must have taken it. I might have been careless and lost the first purse—that little bead affair—and I might even have lost the second; but three in a string—that's too much like a habit. I hardly ever lay my things down anywhere and forget them like Jessie does. If she had lost three purses in a week, I shouldn't have been at all surprised."

"Madeline's fountain pen is missing, too," said Julia slowly, puckering her forehead into an unbecoming frown. "And my Cicero and Bessie's jeweled barrette, and Gwynne's owl stickpin. Either there must be an epidemic of losing things at Ivy Hall, or else there is a kleptomaniac among us."

"Yes, whatever that is," said Grace skeptically.

"Don't you know the meaning of 'kleptomaniac'?"

"It sounds like a lunatic asylum."

"It is one who appropriates other people's property from force of habit, or—er—"

"I should call that a plain thief," Grace rasped sharply.

"No, it's a disease. Doctors say something is the matter with their head—brains, you know."

"Well, there certainly will be something the matter with this 'clipped-true-maniac's' head when I get through with it, if I ever catch her," declared the wrathy victim, shoving the drawer back into the dresser at the end of her fruitless search, and scrambling hastily to her feet as someone tapped at the door.

"Come in," called Julia, and Tabitha entered, bearing the lost Cicero and Madeline's pen in her hand.

"What's the matter?" demanded the newcomer, observing at once the disturbed look on the faces of the two girls. "You are not quarreling, are you?"

"Nope," answered Grace curtly. "I've lost your quarter."

"My quarter!" echoed Tabitha.

"The one I owe you."

"And you are all stewed up because of that?

Why, I don't need it, Grace. Keep it as long as you like."

" 'Tisn't that entirely," owned Grace. "My money has been stolen."

"Are you sure?" asked Tabitha gravely.

"Sure? Does it stand to reason that I am scattering purses broadcast over the city of Los Angeles? I *might* have lost the first one in the park last Saturday, and it is barely possible the ring purse slipped off my belt on the car Tuesday, but I haven't been off the grounds since then nor had any use for my purse, yet the third one is gone with your quarter in it."

Tabitha's eyes grew troubled. "I don't understand it," she said finally. "All these missing things could hardly have been lost, seems to me, or even mislaid—not all in a bunch like they have been disappearing; though I have just found Julia's Cicero on my table with Madeline's pen inside the cover." She wisely forbore adding that both book and pen had been hidden underneath Gloriana's stack of books and just by chance she had discovered them in a hasty search for a note-book she had loaned her room-mate.

"That's queer," said Julia. "I declare I haven't studied Latin in your room for a week."

"I know it," answered Tabitha easily, though the hot blood mounted her cheek at the other girl's tone. "I must have gathered it up with my own books in the class-room; but I haven't the faintest idea where that pen came from."

"Well, books and pens could easy enough be mislaid," said Grace, perceiving Tabitha's embarrassment and flying to her aid. "I shouldn't think much about such things disappearing after that trick of Cassandra's. Maybe she didn't get it good from the principal for shuffling that bunch the way she did; but she denies knowing anything about the mysterious loss of jewelry, money and such like."

"You have seen her then?" A relieved look swept over Tabitha's face.

"Yes, and I really believe she is telling the truth this time."

"I hope so. I should hate to think of Cassie's being a—"

"Thief," supplemented Julia. "No, I don't

think she would carry it to that point. She is mean in lots of ways and tells fibs when it is to her advantage, and carries her joking too far, but I never knew her to be dishonest in regard to the other girls' possessions. She really has no reason, for she is supplied with more spending money right along than any girl in school."

"I can't think of a soul here who would deliberately steal from the others unless it might possibly be—" Tabitha held her breath, fearful lest they should put her own suspicion in words—"that new girl, the one who took Minnie Graves' place in January."

"Nina Frye?"

"Yes."

"Oh, she is such a timid little thing!" protested the maid from Silver Bow. "She has hardly courage enough to tell her own name."

"She is the only new member among us since the holidays. We had no trouble about losing our things before Christmas."

"That's true," admitted Tabitha, relieved in spite of herself at the unexpected naming of the stranger who had recently joined their ranks. "But I don't believe she would do

such a thing. Why, she has never been inside our room to my knowledge, and yet my coral necklace is gone—" Before she considered the consequences, the fateful words slipped from her tongue, and Julia and Grace gasped weakly, "Your beautiful corals! Oh, Kitty! Have you *no* idea where they went?"

Tabitha shook her head. She did have her suspicions, gripping, grinding, crushing, cruel suspicions, but they were for no other soul to know, so she deliberately and resolutely shook her head.

"Have you reported it to Miss Pomeroy?"

"No—not yet."

"Why not?"

"I—hate to—somehow. She has had so many things to worry her of late, and—"

"But Kitty, your corals are worth heaps of money."

Tabitha nodded. They were one of her most prized possessions. Her mother had worn them when she was a girl, and their mysterious disappearance had caused her many bitter tears. Nevertheless, she was sorry she had told the girls of her loss, and sought to make light of the matter by saying, "Likely

as not, I have put them away for safe-keeping somewhere and will run across them when I am not looking for them. Please don't mention it to anyone else—not yet, anyway. If they don't turn up soon, I shall advertise or tell Miss Pomeroy. Now I must return Madeline's pen and get back to my lessons, or I'll get zero in history to-morrow." She turned toward the door, but paused again to add, "And say, don't let's tell any of the girls that we thought Nina might be responsible for our losses. I truly don't think she has anything to do with it, but we must make sure before we accuse her."

Troubled and perplexed, she hurried out of the room and up to the lonely tower where Vera and Madeline held the fort alone.

"What do you think?" they greeted her excitedly. "Hattie Horner's watch is gone, and Chrystobel's ruby ring. Hattie is crying torrents and Miss Pomeroy has just been up here to investigate. The hall window looks as if it had been pried up and there are steps in the dust on the veranda roof. She thinks maybe a burglar has been paying us a visit."

"Burglars!" Tabitha sighed with relief.

It was queer she had not thought of that before. And yet, if a burglar had ransacked the premises, he would have made off with everything at once, instead of filching one trinket one day, and another the next. That was the way things had been disappearing. She had missed her corals four days ago, but she could have taken her oath that Hattie had worn her watch that very morning.

More than ever perturbed at these conflicting facts, she withdrew from the tower room as soon as possible, and hurried down to her own domain on the second floor. Here she found Gloriana standing dismayed and bewildered over her open dresser drawer, staring with fascinated eyes at a string of beautiful, rosy coral, a jeweled barrette and a mosaic brooch. "Oh, Kitty," she gulped, lifting a pair of pitifully tragic eyes at the sound of the closing door. "How do you suppose those things came here? I swear I never touched them, but you know what the girls will think. They are already saying there must be a thief at Ivy Hall, and if they knew I had found some of the lost things in my drawer, they would believe I really stole them. Who do you sup-

pose put them there? Who would be mean enough to try to make it look as if I were the thief? Even Cassandra wouldn't go that far. Oh, Kitty, what shall I do?"

Tabitha had stood like one paralyzed beside her wretched mate, and as Gloriana turned her miserable eyes toward the thin face, she saw there an expression that caused her to cry out in wounded pleading, "Tabitha! You don't think I took those things!"

The black head shook slowly from side to side, but already Gloriana had read the look of doubt in her companion's face, and it seemed as if her very blood were turned to ice.

"Oh!" she moaned softly, "*she* thinks *I* stole them! Why is everyone so cruel? What have I done to deserve such treatment?"

Sick and faint, she turned away from the dresser with its tell-tale articles, and looked out into the stormy night, wishing that she were lost forever in that merciful darkness. Was life always to be so harsh and unkind to this unhappy orphan?

Tabitha's voice roused her from her revery. "Are these the only lost things you have—found?"

The pause was very slight, but Gloriana noticed it, and turned furiously upon her room-mate; but the hot words died unspoken at sight of the misery in the dark, oval face, and she merely answered, "They are. If you have any doubts, search my things—"

"I stumbled upon Julia's Cicero and Madeline's fountain pen among your books," murmured Tabitha in constrained tones, "and here is Mildred Shepherd's embroidered scarf under your handkerchief box. That is why I asked."

Gloriana reeled giddily, and without a sound slipped in a dead faint to the floor. Tabitha had the rare presence of mind to throw the stolen articles into her own dresser drawer and shut it tightly before she summoned help. But somehow, in spite of all her caution and painstaking care, the finger of suspicion seemed to point toward unlucky Gloriana as the thief, for, though many of the lost articles mysteriously reappeared, others were not returned, and their owners—silly little girls—were willing to believe almost anyone guilty.

Even Miss Pomeroy, who made a thorough investigation of the unfortunate affair, seemed

to suspect the little cripple—at least so it appeared to Gloriana—but as nothing could be proved against her, she was not dismissed from Ivy Hall; though often it seemed to the unhappy victim of misfortune as if it would have been easier to bear dismissal even under such circumstances, than to meet the sorrowful gaze of her teachers and the averted eyes of her mates. No wonder poor Gloriana wilted and grew thin and white; but at a most opportune moment something happened which diverted the attention of every member of the school, and the persecution of the innocent lame girl ceased abruptly.

A ghost appeared at Ivy Hall—not merely a sweet voice singing from the high tower, but a sure-enough, white-clad spectre, which moved with noiseless footsteps along the corridors at night and moaned in a most blood-curdling manner, vanishing in thin air, apparently, when its awful march was done. Strangely enough, the apparition paid its first visit to the tower room also, one Friday night when Madeline had gone home to remain over Sunday, and Vera was left alone in the cupola.

The next morning she appeared in the din-

ing-room hall white as a sheet and so shaky that even Miss Jeremy commented on her appearance and recommended a day's treatment in the infirmary; but Vera protested that she would soon be all right, and to prove her assertion, she forced her usual roguish smile to her lips and gulped down every mouthful of the breakfast set before her. But once out of sight of the argus-eyed teachers, she wilted miserably, and the anxious girls clustered about her in alarm.

"You are really sick!" insisted Chrystobel, noting with alarm the bloodless lips. "Do you ever faint? I'm going to call Miss Pomeroy."

"Don't you dare," whispered Vera, shivering convulsively. "It's only that I got an awful scare last night."

"How?"

"I saw a—ghost."

"Vera! Where?"

"In the tower room. It came through the door without opening it at all and stood beside my bed."

There was a moment of breathless silence; then Myra scoffed, "You had a bad nightmare,

kid. Remember what the other tower ghost proved to be?" A number of girls laughed nervously, but many were so thoroughly impressed by Vera's manner as well as by her story that they trembled in sympathy, and shook their heads at the gayer members.

"It was not the nightmare!" protested Vera vigorously. "I woke with a start in the middle of the night when everything was as black as a stack of black cats, and there was an awful white shape coming in through the door—"

"Thought you said it *didn't* come in through the door," interrupted Myra.

"I said it didn't *open* the door, and it didn't, for the hinges squeak something awful lately, and last night there wasn't a sound when that hideous phantom came into the room."

"What—what did you do?" asked Clara in a frightened whisper.

"At first I was too scared for anything," confessed the girl, shivering anew with recollection. "Then when the shape stopped in the middle of the room, I—I asked what it wanted."

"And did it speak?" cried Myra, now eagerly alert.

"Yes, it groaned out in perfectly awful tones that it was the spirit of the departed come back to tell its tale—"

"What was its tale?" inquired Gwynne, as Vera broke off in the middle of her sentence.

"I don't know. It came up to my bed then and reached out its terrible claw-like hands as if to grab me. I heard—its—bones—rattle, —girls. And I screamed, or tried to—and when I opened my eyes again, it was gone."

"Why didn't you come downstairs to our room?" asked Bessie. "We would have made a place for you and you'd not have got so scared thinking about it all alone in the tower."

"I meant to do that," admitted Vera, "but the ghost must have camped on the stairs, for all the rest of the night I could hear it groan and rattle every few minutes."

"Shall we tell Miss Pomeroy?"

"Not yet," pleaded the victim of the ghostly visit. "She would say I ate too much pie for dinner last night, and had an attack of indigestion."

"And she wouldn't be far from wrong," muttered Myra under her breath; but never-

theless, when she prepared for bed that night, she locked her door, which was strictly against the rules. Poor Clara was so wrought up over the ghost story of the morning that a splitting headache and high fever sent her to the infirmary to be doctored up, so Myra had their room all to herself that night, and might be pardoned for slipping the bolt in the lock before scrambling under the covers to dream of ghosts and goblins.

Her sleep was somewhat fitful and restless, in spite of her outspoken scorn concerning the midnight visitor to the tower, and she awoke with a start from a lurid dream to hear a gentle tapping at her door. Thinking it might be Clara returning to her own bed, or some of the girls wanting help, she called drowsily, "Who is it?"

"The spirit of the departed," groaned a sepulchral voice from the hall, "come back to earth with its tale—"

Myra's eyes flew wide open in horror, for through the transom above her door fell the wavering shadow of a white-clad, grotesque figure with outstretched arms beckoning wildly. The spirit's sentence was never fin-

ished, for Myra, naturally a courageous girl, seized her shoe, lying close beside her bed, and hurled it with accurate aim through the transom, as she called in mocking tones,

"Take your old tale somewhere else. It doesn't interest me."

There was a terrific crash, the figure vanished, but the sound of breaking glass and the thud of Myra's shoe on the opposite wall aroused all the third-floor girls, and they tumbled into the hall, clad only in their nightgowns, and frightened half out of their wits.

"Fire, fire!" yelled one.

"Burglars!" screamed another.

"Help, police!" shrieked a third, and pandemonium reigned.

Miss Jeremy was as scared as her charges, for as she darted out of her door to discover the cause of the unearthly racket, she collided with a horrible, tall, white apparition floating down the corridor. It seized her about the neck, hugged her vigorously, and vanished, leaving her weak and fainting on the floor.

Myra was found with her head under the bed-clothes, laughing hysterically; but no one doubted her story when she had been quieted

sufficiently to relate her night's experience, for the shoe and broken transom bore out her statements. Then, too, Miss Jeremy corroborated her description of the mysterious visitor; and the principal was sorely puzzled. A rigid investigation showed each girl in her own bed except Clara and Vera in the infirmary, so the theory that some pupil enjoyed practical joking seemed absurd.

But as the spook suddenly ceased its activities, the girls concluded it had taken Myra's advice and sought a more sympathetic audience, while the teachers tried to persuade themselves that mince pie and coffee two nights in succession had started an epidemic of nightmare. However, the excitement gradually died down for lack of fuel, and peace once more spread its wings over Ivy Hall when, unannounced, the ghost again made its appearance.

This time Cassandra and Gwynne were favored with a visit, but the latter slept so soundly that she missed seeing the spectre altogether, and awoke only when seized in the convulsive grip of her thoroughly frightened room-mate, who, sobbing and terrified, tore

back the covers and scrambled in on top of unconscious Gwynne just as the gray shadows of early morning were beginning to steal through the room.

"My conscience, child!" yelled the startled girl, sitting bolt upright in bed and trying to free herself from the strangling arms. "Are you trying to choke me to death?"

"Oh, Gwynne, the ghost!"

"Where?"

"Right there by my bed!"

"There's nothing there, Cassie. Look and see for yourself."

But Cassandra couldn't be persuaded. "It *was* there," she insisted. "It came and shook my bed until I woke up, and then it—it—oh! it talked about its tale of woe—only I screamed and it—oh! it went up in smoke. It smelled like sulphur, truly!"

Gwynne could detect no such odor, though she sniffed until she made a wrinkle in her nose, she said; so she decided that Cassandra also had been a victim of the nightmare, and after much coaxing, succeeded in quieting the child's fears. But there was no more sleep for either of them that night. Both concluded

that it would be wiser to say nothing about Cassandra's fancy to the other girls unless there should be further developments, and for a wonder, the younger girl held her tongue. But the secret of her silence was not her promise to her room-mate, but the fact that no one else mentioned ghosts the next day, and the child began to wonder if after all she had dreamed of the white shape by her bedside. So she kept still and waited to see if others were visited by the mysterious spook.

Just here the Ivy Hall ghost blundered. Had it used discretion, and not been so anxious to tell its tale of woe, it might have become a famous spirit. But promptly as the clock struck twelve the next night, the gaunt spectre appeared again on the second floor, tapping on walls and moaning in a most blood-curdling fashion. Tabitha's room this time was the spot it had chosen in which to tell its tale, but it had reckoned without its host.

Gloriana's bed stood nearest the door, and true to its habit, the apparition glided up to the foot-rail, and gently shook it. The lame girl's eyes flew open instantly, and in frozen horror

she beheld the ghostly shape at her feet. "Wh-at do you think you are doing here?" she quavered, scarcely able to articulate a word.

Now this was not the question which usually greeted the spook, and it naturally was somewhat confused. "You are—I am—that is—" stammered the ghost, even forgetting its hollow voice; and Gloriana, surprised at the wholly unexpected revelation, leaped from bed, and unmindful of her lameness, started in pursuit of the panic-stricken spook, who turned and fled up the broad staircase to the third floor, with her trailing robes streaming out behind her and her nimble feet making a very realistic patter on the polished stairs.

Either the sound of voices in the room, or the jar of flying feet awakened Tabitha from a sound sleep just in time to see Gloriana vanish through the doorway, and she sat up with dull foreboding in her heart. Could it be that Gloriana was playing the part of ghost, and scaring the whole school in such a shameless manner? What should she do? Follow the girl and bring her back, make known the

facts of the case to the principal, or let someone else find out the identity of Ivy Hall's ghost?

Before she had arrived at any satisfactory conclusion, a shrill, piercing scream rang through the silent building, a door banged somewhere overhead, there was the sound of a heavy object falling down steps, and then again silence—deathlike, absolute. Tabitha sprang to her feet and rushed for the hall, but others were there ahead of her. The corridor was filled with students and teachers, lights flashed on, and a curious scene was revealed.

Gloriana, senseless and bleeding from an ugly cut on the forehead, lay at the foot of the stairs, still clasping an ungainly clothes-hamper in her arms. The cover had been wrenched off in the descent, and a strange array of articles adorned the length of the flight. There were embroidered handkerchiefs, collars, a belt or two, Chrystobel's ruby ring, Jessie's silver buckles, Isabel's locket, Estelle's brooch, Mildred's bracelet, Gwynne's gloves which had never been worn—all the little trinkets missing for so long—and the girls gasped for

breath as they glanced from the unconscious face of their mate to the spilled treasures on the stairs.

"Where do you suppose she got them?" whispered Myra, wringing out a towel and passing it to Madame, who was endeavoring to stop the flow of blood from the cut.

"She *found* zem all right," answered the little French woman with emphasis, as she worked frantically, and wondered what was delaying the principal so long.

"I'd like to know what she meant to do with them," said Julia suspiciously.

"Meant—to—do—wiz—zem," echoed the teacher. "What you s'pose she meant to do wiz zem? Wait till she have life again and she will tell you all."

As if she had heard the words, the girl's gray eyes fluttered slowly open, and Gloriana stared up into the sea of curious faces above her. "What has happened?" she murmured weakly. "Oh,—she pushed me backwards and shut the door. She didn't know I was so near the stairs, and I fell. The hamper wasn't fastened to the wall like ours, and it came along with me when I caught hold of it."

"Who pushed you?" asked Myra gently, still chafing the cold hands.

"Hat—the ghost. I chased it."

"The ghost!" Color flew from a dozen faces, and breath came in jerks.

"Maybe it's the ghost that has been swiping things," suggested Myra, breaking the profound hush.

"Do—you—still think—I did?" whispered Gloriana, feeling instinctively that the mystery was not yet clear to the girls, although she herself understood it perfectly.

"No, we don't!" declared Tabitha stoutly, suddenly perceiving a clue to the mystery, "and we are sorry we ever suspected you, Gloriana."

"That's right," added Myra heartily, but at this moment Miss Pomeroy arrived noiselessly upon the scene, from above, leading frightened Chrystobel, whom she gave into Madame's keeping for the night, and dispersed the girls with the words, "Now back to bed, everyone of you. The ghost has disappeared for the last time, and Ivy Hall will not be haunted again."

Then seeing the suspicious glances cast

after Chrystobel's retreating form, she added, "No, it is not Chrystobel. She had nothing to do with the matter. But we'll lose no more sleep on account of ghosts and goblins. Now lights out at once."

The next morning one chair at Miss Jeremy's table was vacant. Chrystie's roommate had departed from Ivy Hall before breakfast, without saying good-bye to any of her mates, but the story leaked out bit by bit.

"It was Hattie Horner," whispered one girl to another.

"Yes, but Gloriana suggested it," said a third.

"Gloriana Holliday? How?"

"Oh, I didn't mean she helped plan it. But her singing in the tower made the girls think of ghosts, and suggested a way for Hattie to get even with those she didn't like."

"Did she really steal her own watch, too?"

"Why—er, she took all those things and hid some of them in Gloriana's dresser so it would look like Gloriana stole them. Hattie hated Gloriana. The rest of them she dropped into an unused hamper near her own door, and that night when Glory chased her into her

room, she just barely got inside the door in time to bang it shut so's Glory couldn't follow any further."

"And she shoved Gloriana, too."

"Yes, she shoved her, and Glory lost her balance—she didn't have her crutch—and when she grabbed the hamper, it tumbled over with her, and spilled all the things in it."

"Didn't Chrystobel know what Hattie was up to all this time?"

"No, not for certain. She had begun to suspect that something was wrong and Hattie wasn't the girl she had supposed. They had several tiffs about different things, but Chrystie didn't know for certain what was the trouble until Hattie flew into the room that night with the sheet still wrapped around her, and locked the door behind her."

"Then 'twas Chrystie who told!"

"No, Chrystobel was too scared at first to think of anything, and before Hattie could quiet her, Miss Pomeroy was knocking at the door. Hattie hadn't even time to pull the pillow case off her head."

"The principal must have suspected," broke in another eager voice in awed tones, "for her

room is on the first floor, and yet she had Hattie cornered before she even knew Gloriana was hurt."

"Yes, she was terribly surprised to find that anyone had fallen downstairs. She thought the bumping noise was the hamper."

"I heard her telling Madame that she just saw the big basket scooting down the flight, but had no idea that any person was with it."

"Well," sighed Myra, who loved excitement, "it's all over now. Hattie has one, Chrystie has made up with Tabitha again and apologized handsomely to Gloriana, and the ghost of Ivy Hall has vanished forever. Everything has ended beautifully, and yet I shall kind of miss that old spook. It was so —so exciting—and shivery."

CHAPTER XIII

A MAY-DAY HEROINE

"I declare it's not a bit fair," grumbled Clara Kelso, with a petulant shrug of her shapely shoulders. "Everything nice that comes along she gobbles up, and none of the rest of us get a chance at the honors."

"Who gobbles up everything?" asked Bessie, sauntering up to the little knot of girls on the lawn, in such an animated discussion that they had forgotten to lower their voices, and fragments of the conversation floated up to the ears of a sober-eyed, red-haired girl perched in the great pepper tree near by, trying to follow the campaign of Cæsar.

"Tabitha Catt," pouted Clara.

"What has she done now?" asked Bessie in surprise.

"Why, she wants to be Queen of the May."

"She doesn't, either!" declared Bessie, with more vigor than politeness in her tones.

"She is one of the candidates, isn't she?"

"Yes, but how? Chrystobel proposed her and Grace did, too, and Jessie and Vera and Gwynne and Myra—*all* the girls on the second floor want her, and lots on the third. Besides, she has withdrawn her name. She won't let us vote for her."

"Why?" gasped the whole group, astonished at this piece of news.

"She won't say, but I think she wants Gloriana to have it and most of the girls would vote for Kitty if they got a chance."

"Gloriana!" spluttered Clara indignantly. "Of course it's Gloriana if it isn't Tabitha herself. But it *has* to be one of the two. Everyone has gone daffy over Gloriana just because she found out who was playing ghost and scaring us all. *Anybody* could have done as much. Besides, Gloriana won't make a good Queen of the May. Why, she limps! And there are lots of prettier girls in the school. There is Chrystobel, for instance, or —" she paused suggestively, and shook back a wealth of soft, fluffy hair from her delicately-colored, doll face with a conscious air; but purposely Bessie misunderstood her.

"Or Cassandra Hertford," she finished mis-

chievously. "Cassie is a perfect beauty when she is good-natured, and she would make a lovely picture for the Queen of the May."

Clara shrugged her shoulders disdainfully. "Cassandra may be pretty," she reluctantly conceded, "but she is too young. One of the older girls should have that position."

"Whom would you suggest?" Bessie innocently asked, winking at Estelle, and giving Kate Magee a vicious poke in the ribs.

"Why—why—" stammered Clara, who very much coveted that honor for herself in the coming festivities, yet hardly dared to nominate herself, "Gwynne Ralston has a regal figure, or there is Julia Moore—she has a superb carriage—"

"Or Madeline Gray," added irrepressible Bessie very solemnly; "her father has a splendid automobile—"

"Bessie Jorris! You mean thing! You know what I meant. Well, anyway, I shan't vote for Gloriana Holliday—that's flat!"

"Guess we'll have to elect her without your vote, then," returned Bessie cheerfully. "She deserves to be queen if—"

"Deserves!" burst out Clara hotly. "I

never was so tired of a word in my life. One can't turn around at Ivy Hall without hearing of someone who *deserves* some honor because they have done something—"

"Or someone," suggested Myra Haskell, who had joined the group unnoticed. "What's all the fuss about?"

"The Queen of the May," Kate informed her.

"Clara's huffy at Bess," added Estelle in a whisper.

"Clara is generally huffy at someone," laughed Myra. "I believe she lives in a huff. What is the trouble? Does she covet that royal position herself?"

"Looks that way."

"Well, she'd better make up her mind to disappointment then. Gloriana will win. Kitty has withdrawn from the race and so has Gwynne, and Chrystie won't run at all."

"Then who is against Gloriana?"

"Myrtie Miller's name is the only one on the bulletin board now, but Clara's will be there before long. She is fishing for someone to nominate her. Let's post her name! Just for the fun of it!"

"But Gloriana—won't it lessen her chances?"

"Nary a bit," replied Myra easily. "She has it cinched now. Why, everybody worth counting will vote for her!"

"Then what is your object in nominating Clara?"

"Oh, she wants to run so badly, it is a shame not to give her the chance to find out that when she bucks up against Tabitha or Tabitha's candidate, she is strictly not in it."

Myra and Kate strolled off toward the hall with its bulletin board, and the remainder of the group gradually dispersed in twos and threes, leaving Gloriana to her thoughts in her pepper-tree retreat. That they were troubled thoughts was very evident from the way she puckered her forehead, and kicked at the unoffending branches below her. When the girls had approached her for permission to propose her name as candidate for Queen of the May, she was highly flattered. In her conceit she thought they wanted her for herself alone, and her heart exulted; but now her eyes were opened and she understood it all. Tabitha's friends would vote for her for *Tab-*

itha's sake. Since the banishment of the Ivy Hall ghost and the discovery of the real thief of the missing trinkets, Gloriana had found the days very sweet, for youth is a hero-worshipper, and the lame girl's courage had won the admiration of the whole school. It seemed as if the girls could not be good enough to her in their effort to make up for the grievous wrongs they had done her, and Gloriana throve in their genial comradeship. Even Cassandra buried the hatchet, and ceased to pester her in any way. Everywhere it was smiles and sunshine. A glad sparkle danced in the gray eyes, a joyous thrill in her heart made her limping steps seem light. This was living!

And now Clara said the girls had taken her up on Tabitha's account—that all her little triumphs were due to her room-mate's influence. Somewhere she had heard that Tabitha was instrumental in planning the Christmas surprise which had brought her so much joy just in the thought that *all* the girls had remembered her with some little gift. Rumor whispered that the girl from Silver Bow had refused a dozen invitations to spend the holidays with worshipful mates, just for the sake

of giving her unfortunate room-mate a good time. Was she, after all, indebted to *Tabitha's* popularity for the friendship of Ivy Hall girls? Had she then failed to win her own way into their hearts?

She would not try for the Queen of the May, much as she longed for the distinction. No, her mind was made up. She would withdraw from the race and leave the field clear for the haughty Myrtie Miller and doll-faced Clara Kelso. There would be no joy in her triumph if she won because of another's influence. With a mournful sigh of regret and resignation, she slipped from her hiding-place and limped away to the history-room in response to the pealing of the class bell.

The election was to be held the following day at the close of the afternoon session of school, but Gloriana said nothing of her sudden determination not to run, for in the meantime she had made an important discovery, which took away the sting of her bitter reflections, but only strengthened her purpose. To the girls who congratulated her in advance for what looked like certain victory, she merely smiled enigmatically and held her tongue.

So, when the noisy, excited pupils trooped into the assembly hall for the all-important election, they were thunderstruck to hear the queen of their choice say, "Miss President, I desire to withdraw my name as candidate—"

"Here, here!" shouted the astonished girls in high dudgeon, drowning the sound of her voice by their loud protests. "You can't do that. We won't let you."

"Order!" commanded Gwynne, the dignified president of the assembly, rapping sharply on the table with a tack-hammer. "Miss Gloriana has the floor."

"But she shan't withdraw," expostulated Myra, disregarding all rules of order. "We want *her* for our queen."

Gloriana was genuinely amazed. She looked from one face to another and read there real affection. She had been mistaken in thinking they were supporting her for Tabitha's sake. She glanced at her room-mate. Surprise and disappointment filled the black eyes. Her heart gave a throb of exultation. Here was a triumph undreamed of.

"Gloriana, proceed," commanded the president, ignoring Myra's interruption.

"As I said before," began the lame girl, a little confused by the unlooked-for demonstration, "I wish to withdraw—"

"You have nothing to say in the matter," cried Jessie, waving her handkerchief enthusiastically. "Three cheers for Gloriana Holliday, Ivy Hall's Queen of the May! All ready!"

In spite of the tack-hammer's vigorous rat-a-tat-tat, the cheers were given lustily.

Then Clara's shrill voice made itself heard above the din. "If Gloriana wishes to withdraw from the contest, I see no reason why we should deny her the privilege."

Myra opened her lips to hiss, but the amused look on the lame girl's face held her in check, and Gloriana, finding that she once more had the floor, turned toward her opponent, and with a mischievous twinkle in her eye, said demurely, "Therefore, please allow me to withdraw in favor of—Miss Pomeroy."

A dead silence greeted her remark. Then Myra murmured in bewildered tones, "Miss Pomeroy?"

"The principal of Ivy Hall," supplemented Gloriana.

"She is too old," cried Clara in undisguised astonishment at the very idea.

"It is absurd," agreed one of her few allies.

"Her hair is as white as snow," added another.

"She would never consent," said Myrtie stiffly.

"What put that idea into your head?" queried Gwynne, forgetting that as presiding officer of the assembly, she was supposed to keep order.

"May Day is Miss Pomeroy's birthday," smiled Gloriana, elated at the stir she had created.

"How did you find that out?" demanded Tabitha. "She would never tell any of us before."

"She didn't tell me. I happened to hear her talking with Señorita Munjose about birthdays. She has never been Queen of the May, she said, though when she was a child she always wanted to celebrate the day in that manner. I thought it would be nice to have her our Queen this year, supposing—"

"I am sure she would do it to please us," cried Julia heartily.

"She would make a lovely queen, too," agreed Vera.

"And it is such a novel plan," added Chrystobel.

"I move we elect Miss Pomeroy unanimously," proposed Myra promptly.

"Suppose she won't accept," suggested Clara hopefully.

"We won't let her refuse," replied Gwynne. "You have heard the motion, all in favor say 'Aye',—no, all in favor please rise."

The school rose *en masse*. Miss Pomeroy was elected Ivy Hall's Queen of the May, and contrary to Clara's hopes, she accepted the honor without demur. When the committee of girls chosen to interview her on the subject made their announcement, she had been tempted to refuse, even to laugh at the idea of one her age crowned May Queen. But as she hesitated, trying to find the proper words in which to couch her refusal, she suddenly perceived how seriously in earnest were these pupils, and to their delight, she smiled radiantly and exclaimed with girlish glee, "I shall be most happy to accept if you really think an old lady like I will do."

"Oh, we do, we do!" they chorused, and rushed ecstatically away to spread the good news among the rest.

May Day was an ideal day. The sun shone warm, the sky was cloudless, the rose garden a mass of fragrant blossoms, the closely-cut lawn smooth as velvet,—everything was at its best. Elaborate preparations had been made, for May Day festivities at Ivy Hall always took the form of a reception for parents and friends, and the girls were particularly anxious to make such events a grand success. So no pains had been spared in decorating the school buildings, or in planning the quaint and dainty costumes of the pupils. The stately queen made a lovely picture in a shimmering silver gown, and visitors, as well as the students were charmed by the sweet face, which, under its crown of snowy hair and crimson roses looked almost as youthful as those of the gay-hearted maidens who sung and danced around her that bright, glorious afternoon.

The May-pole dance by the younger girls was a decided success, the choruses were beautiful, in fact, the whole program was rendered with scarcely a hitch. True, little Isabel

Jones, in her zeal to perform her part, stepped on the flounce of Mildred Shepherd's gauzy dress in the butterfly dance; but Mildred, with rare presence of mind, threw the torn widths over her shoulder and danced merrily on. One of harum-scarum Jessie Wayne's Indian clubs flew from her grasp during a very spirited drill, but nimble Myra saw the accident, caught the flying missile with a dexterous turn of the wrist, and amid a round of applause from the appreciative audience, returned it to its embarrassed owner.

Tabitha's reading so pleased the assembled friends that they called her back once, twice, and even a third time, which so flustered that young damsel that she stepped too near the edge of the platform under the trees, and just as she began the opening lines:

"If you strike a thorn or rose
Keep a goin'!"

her foot slipped and she plunged out of sight in a sea of roses and fern which banked the rostrum.

A gasp of dismay rose from a hundred throats as the speaker disappeared among the

thorns, but the next instant a ripple of amusement swept over the throng, for plucky Tabitha, with only the top of her black head showing above her leafy screen, took up her recitation where her fall had interrupted it, and finished the simple words with her customary charm.

However, no serious mishap occurred to mar the afternoon's pleasure, and when the set program had drawn to a close, the merry girls quickly scattered among their visitors to perform their duties as hostesses and greet families and friends. Grace Tilton, in a gaudy Japanese kimono, served tea and rice-cakes in a miniature Japanese garden, making a charming little Oriental with her black hair skewered on top of her head in a huge knot, liberally decorated with tiny fans. Julia Moore as a stately Goddess of Liberty, dispensed ice-cream and cake in the shady pergola. Gloriana, dressed as the fairy queen, stood behind a huge punch bowl in what appeared to be the center of a gigantic calla lily, and poured frappé into cunning little cups; while Myra, in fantastic gipsy garb, presided over the roaring bonfire near by, and incidentally toasted

marshmallows in the flame—a cosmopolitan May Day celebration, perhaps, but a jolly one.

Suddenly Bessie Jorris, chairman of the reception committee, pushed her way through the crowd, followed by a tall, distinguished-looking, dark man, whose keen eyes took in every detail of his surroundings, as they swept over the gardens as if in search of someone.

"She was here just a minute ago," said Bessie apologetically, when she failed to find the object of their search. "She must be close by now."

"Whom are you looking for?" asked Chrystobel, who was jostled against Bessie just in time to overhear her anxious remark.

"Kitty—Tabitha," answered the other. "This is her father—"

"And this, I am sure, must be Chrystobel," said the gentleman in his deep, bass voice, extending his hand frankly, and looking pleased at the encounter. "My daughter has described you so often I know I can't be mistaken."

Chrystobel blushed furiously, stammered in confusion, "I am sure you are glad to know me," and then realizing how she had bungled

her greeting, she pointed hastily across the terrace toward the bonfire, and gurgled, "Tab —Kit—Puss is over there."

At the same instant, a low murmur of horror burst from the lips of the throng, and the trio, staring in the direction Chrystobel had pointed, were transfixed at the sight which met their gaze. Cassandra, still clad in her fluffy butterfly dress, whisked by the bonfire just as a long tongue of flame licked up through fresh fuel which Myra was adding with lavish hand, and with hungry greed it seemed to leap up the back folds of the lace skirt in a sheet of fire, while Cassandra, unaware of her peril, skipped heedlessly on.

Bessie shut her eyes, Chrystobel crumpled in a faint at her feet, Myra screamed, but it seemed as if everyone had turned to stone. Not a soul sprang to the child's rescue. Then Gloriana came to her senses, and as the blazing figure paused a moment in front of the huge calla lily, puzzled at the strange commotion around her, the fairy queen leaned far out and dumped the frappé, punch bowl and all, over the startled girl. Down she went headlong into the grass, the flames flickered, hissed and

died out; a great sigh swept through the horror-stricken throng; but Cassandra, drenched by the sticky flood, and bruised by the heavy bowl which lay a shattered mass around her, sprang to her feet in frenzied fury.

"Gloriana Holliday!" she roared, shaking her fist at the limp figure, half fainting in her flowery retreat, "You miserable, cowardly wretch!"

"Cassandra," interrupted the white-haired Queen of the May, very gently, as she drew the scorched breadths of the filmy skirt in front of the angry girl, that she might see for herself what had happened, "your dress caught fire. Gloriana put it out. You owe your life, perhaps, to her."

Cassandra looked, grew white as death, and threw herself across the empty frappé counter, sobbing wildly, "Oh, Glory, after all the hateful things I've done to you!"

"Oh, Daddy," whispered Tabitha, running into her father's arms a moment later, when the excitement had somewhat abated, "wasn't she splendid—my Glory?"

"She was indeed," murmured the man huskily. "I want to know your Glory better."

CHAPTER XIV

THE LAUNCHING OF THE GENERAL MACEY

"Well, what do you think of it? Great, isn't it?" Myra beamed enthusiastically upon the little group of sober-faced girls, gathered as usual under the great pepper tree on the school lawn.

"You can well say that," grumbled Birdie Hollister, sourly, "when you are in the race yourself and have a chance to win."

Myra laughed cheerfully. "Huh! I s'pose that *is* the way it looks to you," she acknowledged. "But just take a look at my opponents. What kind of a show have I with Kitty and Julia in the running—or Gloriana? I understand that she is at the head of *all* her classes now."

"You've got Tabitha beaten to a frazzle in geometry," declared Kate, staring moodily at her unopened history, and wishing she had as good a scholarship record.

"Yes, and she has me beaten to a frazzle in

everything else," retorted Myra, with just a ghost of a sigh. "If anyone gets ahead of Kitty, they've got to hustle—that's all I have to say."

"I don't call it fair to spring this thing on us at such a late day," pouted Clara. "If we had known last fall, or even six months ago, maybe some of the rest of us would have had a chance to win."

"How was Miss Pomeroy to let us know any sooner? She published the news as soon as she received it herself. She thought like all the rest of us that her nephew's daughter was to christen the *General Macey*. None of us could tell that Elsie Dane was going to break her ankle only two weeks before the vessel is to be launched. It was only natural then that Mr. Dane should ask an Ivy Hall girl to take that part. Elsie is to be a pupil here herself next year."

"That's all true enough, but Miss Pomeroy might have chosen the girl in some other manner than by scholarship marks," persisted Clara in injured tones.

"That is the fairest way it could be done," Myra declared with the irritating cheerfulness

of one whose name is among the highest six on the school rolls.

"How would you suggest that the fortunate girl be elected?"

"By social rank," said Clara with a haughty toss of her head. Her father had won distinction as an army officer in the Philippines and she was arrogantly proud of the fact.

"By social rank!" echoed the rest of the group in puzzled surprise. "What do you mean by that?"

"Well, there is Myrtie Miller—her grandfather is an admiral. It would be an *honor* to Ivy Hall to be represented by an admiral's granddaughter."

"Or a Philippine General's daughter," suggested Myra maliciously, seeing the drift of her room-mate's remarks.

"If Tabitha had an *admirable* grandfather, would it make her any better as a girl?" demanded Grace witheringly. "Kitty wins her honors on her *own* merits—not on someone else's."

"Good for you, Grace!" applauded Myra boisterously. "Did you get all that, Clara?"

A disdainful shrug of the shoulders was

Clara's only answer, but Birdie mumbled spitefully, "Tabitha hasn't won this honor yet."

"You mean it isn't announced yet," Myra corrected gently.

"I mean what I said. There are five other girls to take into account this time."

"And not a single senior in the bunch," supplemented Grace.

"One of those five may get the prize after all," continued Birdie, ignoring Grace's fling, for both she and Clara were to graduate from Ivy Hall in another month. "Tabitha made a pretty poor beginning last fall."

"None of us can boast of much when it comes to that part of it," said Kate sadly, for she lacked only half a point of having a sufficiently high standing to make her one of the lucky contestants for this coveted honor, and realized that she had only herself to blame.

"That is so," agreed Myra. "We were all a pretty bum lot the first month of school. But Kitty has put in some pretty good licks since then, and I'll bet she wins."

"You don't seem to care much if you lose," said Clara tartly.

"There is no use in being the dog in the

manger, is there? I shall do my best, of course, but even my fairy godmother could not win out for me now, and I have sense enough to know it."

"Your name is second on the list—"

"Arranged alphabetically, my dear. Gwynne Ralston has a better show than I, and her name is last."

"Well, anyway, I wish those exams of next week were over. I don't like the idea of taking them so soon—"

"I do. Then we can enjoy the graduation exercises and class day and bonfires and all that sort of stuff without bothering about the plaguey old exams."

"At any rate, I am glad they won't mean as much to me as to you six," said Clara, bound to have the last word. "We seniors know already whether or not we are to graduate, and I don't see any sense in making us take these exams so near the end of the term, but at least it is a comfort to know we are practically through with school. Next year I shall spend abroad, and then I'll be ready to make my début in society."

"Thank goodness I don't have to make any

day-buse," exclaimed Myra fervently. "I am going to college and be a doctor. They aren't supposed to know anything about day-buse. I am more interested by a good deal in these coming exams and in the launching of the *General Macey* than in all the social whirl of the world. I hope Kitty wins."

Such was the prevailing sentiment of the school, and Gloriana, surprised to find her name among the lucky six, was divided between her natural desire to win the coveted prize—the privilege of christening the first ship to be launched from the Dane Shipbuilding Yards—and her desire to see her dearest friend carry off the laurels.

"It had better be Tabitha," she told herself. "She is so tall and slender and—and dear." She could not truthfully call the black-eyed girl pretty, and yet there was something so winsome and charming about this maid from Silver Bow that made her beautiful in the eyes of her host of friends. It was scarcely to be wondered at that Clara and Birdie should envy her the vivacity of her bright, magnetic personality. So Gloriana mused. "She has had so much unhappiness in her life, she deserves

all the nice things she can have now to make up for it. I had a lovely home for more than six years, and she has only just found her real father. The girls all want her to win and I believe the teachers do, too. It must be nice to have everyone love you that way." She sighed heavily. It had been such a weary tug for her —that year at Ivy Hall—and yet she was glad she had come. She had proved that she was worthy of affection and had won a place in the hearts of the Ivy Hall pupils, which was the essential thing in her own mind, but she realized that much of this was due to Tabitha's championing her cause, and that after all, the *black-eyed maid* was the idol of the school.

"She has earned her place, too," she owned heartily. "I am glad everyone loves her as they do. She says it all came about because of Carrie Carson and Bertha Peck, but I know better. It is just because she is so sweet and lovable herself. I—I hope she wins."

"I had hoped she would win," said a voice almost at her elbow, and Gloriana jumped to hear her own words echoed in such a manner; for, hidden away behind the dense hedge in the garden, she had been unaware of the approach

of these two teachers—Miss Summers and Miss White—until their conversation broke in upon her revery.

"She may yet," replied Miss White hopefully. "I must confess that girl is a great favorite of mine, too, and I am anxious to see her succeed."

"If only she had made a better showing the first month!" sighed Miss Summers. "But as it stands now, Gloriana has almost a point and a half more to her credit than Tabitha has. And there is little likelihood that the examinations will give Tabitha the lead. Of course, if it can't be our black-haired elf, I would rather see Gloriana win than anyone else, but I've set my heart on Tabitha."

"Sh!" warned her companion. "If you wail like that you are apt to be overheard, and teachers are not supposed to have favorites, you know."

"My sakes!" ejaculated Gloriana under her breath, as they passed out of hearing. "What an eavesdropper I am getting to be! Seems as if anyone who wants to talk secrets comes close to where I am studying and empties their heads of everything in them. *I* can't help if

I hear such things. I don't go snooping around to see what I can find out, that's one thing sure. Oh, dear, I wish I hadn't heard what they said! I should so like to smash that bottle against the side of the ship and have my voice ring out so everyone could hear, 'I christen thee—' oh! that horrid spider!" With a suppressed shriek of fright and disgust, Gloriana scrambled to her feet and fled from her shady retreat with her books under her arm.

But she had made her decision. She would not win this coveted honor. It belonged to Tabitha—Tabitha, who had given up her room-mate in order to shelter the tormented little waif; Tabitha, who had sacrificed her own good times that her timid comrade might be happy; Tabitha, who had voluntarily renounced honors that the scholarship pupil might have a chance to win. Tabitha should have the victory this time.

Tabitha, too, was having a battle. The friendly speculation as to which of the "lucky six," as the scholarship contestants were immediately dubbed, would win, of course reached her ears, and she was genuinely surprised to find that the prevailing opinion was that the

real race lay between herself and the little lame orphan from the foothills.

"Oh, dear," she groaned lugubriously, "doesn't that put me in a pretty pickle? I shouldn't mind a single bit beating anyone else —unless 'twas Carrie—but I should feel awfully mean and small to carry off a prize I knew Glory had set her heart on, even if it was of no more importance than the christening of a ship. That is a mighty big honor, but it isn't anything compared to what it would be if the prize had happened to be a year's tuition at Ivy Hall, or something like that. Yet I know Glory is just wild to win. It would be one more feather in her cap, and poor girl, she needs all the triumphs she can have. But it is awfully hard to give it up. Daddy would be so pleased. Maybe he would come down from the desert to see the launching, himself. And wouldn't Tom be tickled to think of his 'skinny, scrawny Tabby Catt' naming a vessel! Oh, dear, I wish I didn't have to compete with Glory. Madame says the final exams will probably settle the question as to who is winner; so that must mean that some of us are pretty close together now. I—I—guess—I

won't study up for finals, but trust to luck. That will give Glory a better chance; and perhaps I won't care so much after a bit about winning the prize."

With her determined mouth set in grim lines, she resolutely shut her geometry, laid aside her books and went down to the garden to swing idly in the May sunshine. And curiously enough, as she swung to and fro amid the flecks of sunlight filtering through the overhanging boughs, she sang under her breath:

" 'There are loyal hearts, there are spirits brave,
There are souls that are pure and true.
Then give to the world the best you have,
And the best will come back to you.

Give love, and love to your heart will flow,
A strength in your utmost need;
Have faith, and a score of hearts will show
Their faith in your word and deed.

For life is the mirror of king and slave,
'Tis just what you are and do;
Then give to the world the best you have,
And the best will come back to you.' "

Examination week arrived at length, and Tabitha had not opened a book; yet in a cool, calm, collected manner she mounted the stairs leading to the mathematics room, and without the usual feeling of nervous dread, and longing for the open air and escape, she received her portion of legal cap and pencils, and plunged into the mysteries of the problems given her to solve. In a surprisingly short time her task was done, and she was conscious that she had made an exceptionally good showing in this, her hardest subject.

"And I wasn't going to try," she exclaimed in comical dismay. "I meant to give Glory every possible chance to win. Well, perhaps the other examinations will be harder than geometry. I was really surprised to think that Miss Summers gave us such easy problems."

But in history it was the same; the Latin period slipped by without a hitch; and French was mere child's play. Tabitha little realized that in foregoing the usual "cramming" previous to the ordeal of final examinations, she had put herself in the very best physical and mental condition for the trying week, and made

possible the thing she had decided to give up for the sake of her friend.

Gloriana, on the other hand, was very nervous and distraught; and remembering Miss Summers' words in the garden, "There is little likelihood that the examinations will give Tabitha the lead," she approached the ordeal with fear and trembling. What if after all she should win, and it was her hand that must break the beribboned bottle of champagne against the side of the noble ship to be launched in another week? Would she—little, lame, red-haired, snub-nosed, homeless waif—be a fit representative of aristocratic Ivy Hall? No, no, she must not snatch the honor from one so much more fitted for that impressive ceremony; she must not win! Yet how could she give it up? Torn with conflicting desires, she clutched her paper and tried to center her thoughts on the task before her, but the questions on the blackboard became a confused jumble of senseless words, her brain reeled with the sickening sensation that she was hopelessly befuddled, and poor Gloriana went down in defeat.

Oh, no, it was not failure—far from it. But

with regretful eyes, she saw the prize slip through her fingers just when she wanted it most. The ordeal was over at last. Then came three days of suspense, and finally the announcement of the victor.

The school was assembled in the chapel, restless, impatient, anxious, but the audible stir of feet, rustling of papers, and subdued whisperings fell away into absolute silence as Miss Pomeroy entered the door and mounted the platform. One could almost hear her own heart beating in the breathless hush. The white-haired principal glanced deliberately over her audience, and it seemed to the girls as if her gaze rested fully a moment upon pale, trembling Julia Moore. Could it be possible that Julia had carried off the honors? A faint stir of excitement swept through the ranks. Then the woman began to speak.

"There is no need for any preliminary words on this occasion," she said, and the girls, hanging on every syllable, sighed thankfully. If there was anything they hated, it was to have a speaker go 'way around Robin Hood's barn before coming to the point of her discourse. "The examination papers have been thor-

oughly inspected and marked, and we are now able to publish the result of the contest. I have the pleasure of announcing that Miss—" involuntarily her eyes sought out frightened, shrinking Gloriana, and a thrill of mingled regret and gladness gripped Tabitha's heart as she saw the glance and thought she understood its meaning—"Tabitha Catt has the highest record for the past year, and is thereby chosen to represent Ivy Hall at the christening of the ship, *General Macey,* next Thursday."

A hearty round of applause drowned any further speech, but Tabitha sat stupefied and uncomprehending in the midst of her friends' congratulations. "It can't be," she kept repeating over and over to herself. "Why, I was sure from what Madame said one day that Gloriana had a better chance to win than I; and then, I never studied a mite. There is some mistake. Or else—"

A disconcerting thought sent the blood rushing to her pale cheeks. Had Gloriana purposely let her win? But this the lame girl strenuously denied.

"No, Kitty," she insisted stoutly. "I—I meant to at first, but when it came to the real

exams, I got so terribly muddled that I couldn't help myself. Even if I had wanted to ever so badly, I could not have taken the prize. Really, I did my level best and I just simply went to pieces; that's all. You have *earned* the reward. Please don't think I had anything to do with it, because I didn't."

So Tabitha was convinced; and with joyous anticipation Ivy Hall set about making preparations for the launching of the ship. The school attended in a body, and from the wildly exuberant Myra to the staid Miss Jeremy, everyone was awe-inspired at the significance of the occasion. The shipyards were liberally decorated with flags and bunting, and the good ship, *General Macey,* lay on the ways ready and waiting for the hand which should send it gliding out upon the great ocean.

"Oh, isn't it grand!" cried Grace, as they jostled with the throng gathered along the shore to witness the impressive ceremonies. "Everybody seems just as eager and excited as I am. Doesn't Kitty look lovely?"

"Yes," Myra agreed, "but I do wish we had better places. From here we can scarcely see Kitty at all, and when she breaks the bottle

of champagne she will be entirely out of sight. We would have a better view across the channel. See the mob chasing over to the other side? Oh, Miss Pomeroy, mayn't we go, too?"

"Where?" asked the principal, who herself had been looking about for a more favorable location for her lively brood.

"Across the channel where all those people are. We won't be so near the ship, but we can see what is going on here better."

"We-ll," the woman hesitated.

"We can get across all right," Myra assured her. "Those pontoons are perfectly safe unless folks are 'fraid cats."

"If Miss Cornwall or Miss White will accompany you, I have no objection to your going, if you keep your heads and don't fall into the water."

"Oh, goody!" chorused the delighted girls. "I know Miss Cornwall will take us. How many are going?"

There was an animated canvass of the excited group, which ended in about half the pupils of Ivy Hall picking their way gingerly across the shaky, bobbing pontoons to the op-

posite bank, where they found more advantageous positions from which to watch the exercises of the morning. To be sure, they were so far distant that only an occasional word of the mayor's address or the other speeches reached their ears, but they were so busy watching Tabitha and wondering when her part in the program would come that they seemed rather relieved than grieved that they could not hear the oratory of the different speakers.

"Men always say such dry things at a time like this anyway," said Myra by way of excuse. "I like to see a ship go kiting down those slippery boards into the water, but I do hate to listen to a lot of city dads eulogizing over the event beforehand. And 'most always someone has to get up and recite that tiresome poem about the launching of a ship."

"Why, Myra Haskell, that's a beautiful thing! You ought to hear Kitty speak it."

"Well, I guess Kit could give it some expression," Myra conceded somewhat grudgingly. "But I never saw anyone else who could. It gives me the creeps to hear someone begin to thrill out the words,

'She starts, she moves, she seems to feel
The thrill of life along her keel.'

Makes me think of a comic picture card we youngsters used to have in our collection when we were kids. 'Twas a picture of a girl learning to skate. The first scene showed her just standing up with her skates on, and it was tagged, 'She starts.' The second part was where she was standing almost on her heels, and her eyes were bugged out like frogs, she was so scared of falling. That was called, 'She moves.' In the third picture, she's a tangle of arms and legs sprawled on the ice, and the pond is cracked all around where she lit. Below that is the rest of the line, 'She seems to feel the thrill of life along her keel.' I never hear anyone recite those verses but I see in my mind's eye that card—"

"Oh, oh!" interrupted Cassandra, springing up from the bank where she had been sitting, and waving her white parasol wildly over her head, "there goes the ship. Watch Kitty! She is pulling the ribbons now. Be sure you whack that whiskey bottle good, Tabitha! If it doesn't bu'st no sailors will ever go to sea on the boat."

In the dead hush that fell upon the great throng as bright-eyed Tabitha drew the bottle of champagne far out on its ribbon hangers and dashed it against the side of the ship just let loose from its moorings, Cassandra's exultant shout was clearly heard by all, and a burst of boisterous laughter followed her speech. But it was quickly stilled, for the great vessel, slipping rapidly down the greased ways, struck the calm waters of the channel with a mighty splash, a huge wave swept up over the bank where the Ivy Hall girls were gathered, and washed the excited, dancing Cassandra far out into the harbor.

"Quick!" cried Gloriana, pointing to a rowboat on the bank close by. "Who can row?"

"I can!" Myra Haskell seized the light craft and shoved it into the water almost before the bystanders realized that anything was amiss, and with Bessie, Gwynne and Gloriana as her aides, she flew to the rescue of their hapless comrade.

Fortunately, Cassandra, though badly frightened, kept her head, obeying instructions to the letter, and was soon drawn out of her impromptu bath, drenched and shivering, but

unharmed. Willing hands lifted her out of the boat as it reached the shore with its burden, and excited voices clamored, "Are you hurt? Did you get wet? How did you fall in? Was the water cold?"

But Cassandra paid no attention to the senseless questions. Lifting a dripping, yet radiant face to her agonized teacher's she sighed ecstatically, "Tabitha bu'sted the bottle all right, didn't she? And now the sailors won't be afraid to hire out on that ship."

CHAPTER XV

A LETTER FROM SILVER BOW

Commencement Day at Ivy Hall had come and gone, lessons were done, and vacation was at hand. Already some of the girls had said good-bye for the summer, and were speeding homeward to join their families for the ten holiday weeks; but fully half of the pupils were still scurrying about the great buildings, packing their trunks, tormenting their teachers and each other, and having the last frolics the old hall would witness until another summer should roll by.

Tabitha, bending over a heap of clothes and trinkets chaotically dumped from her dresser drawers into the middle of the rug, was deep in thought. In the darkest corner of the room, already packed and strapped, stood Gloriana's Christmas suit-case and two large, pasteboard boxes, which contained all the little orphan's worldly possessions; but the owner, Tabitha knew, was hidden away in the garden fighting out a bitter battle.

The year at Ivy Hall, which had begun so inauspiciously and brought so much sorrow and unhappiness, had ended in a triumphant burst of splendor, and Gloriana had risen to dizzying heights of popularity among the girls. But it was all over now, and to-morrow would find her once more in the little town of Manchester, a burden to poor old Granny Conover, who was finding it harder than ever before to make both ends meet. She had tasted the sweetness of living, and dreaded to go back to the old life of vain striving and useless wishing. This year at Ivy Hall had opened up to her a wonderful world full of golden opportunities, and it seemed as if she could not bear to take up again that dreary round of drudgery that the very name Manchester signified to her. Not a word of all this had she mentioned to any of her mates, and she had striven so hard to wear a cheerful smile about her last tasks at school that few suspected the heartache throbbing underneath the mask of sunshine.

But Tabitha knew. She had found a crumpled letter from Granny Conover among the rubbish that her room-mate had thrown out for the maid to burn, and without intending

to pry into another's affairs, she had deciphered the cramped, crooked, scrawling words, telling all about the hard luck which had visited the patient, uncomplaining old soul that winter; how the rheumatism had crippled her until she could scarcely get about at all; how the nanny goat had broken loose one night and wandered off into the canyon, where the next day she was found dead; how the tiny hut had unexpectedly sprung a bad leak during a heavy night rain, and drenched the meagre furnishings of the house, spoiling the little stock of flour, corn-meal and sugar; how the doctor's bill had eaten up nearly all of the scanty pension; and how late the crops were because of the continued rains in the mountains. This, coupled with the sound of hushed sobs in the night when all the rest of the school was asleep, had told Tabitha the whole story; and she understood how much her room-mate dreaded the coming of vacation time. Her return to Manchester would mean one more mouth to feed, and she could scarcely hope to pay her own way for some weeks or months to come.

All of this Tabitha had divined as surely as

though the unfortunate Gloriana had confided to her all her woes; and not knowing what else to do, she had written a full account of it to her father, begging him to let her bring the lame girl home with her for at least a few weeks of the vacation. But although that was more than ten days ago, she had heard never a word from him in reply; and her heart was sore with disappointment.

"I ought not to have suggested such a thing," she told herself, with something of the old-time bitterness in her heart. "I should have known that he would not see the situation as I do. I don't blame him for that, either, because what I wrote him was purely what I surmised. I can't prove for *certain* that a word of it is true; but I *know* it is, and it makes me heart-sick to think of that poor girl going back to Manchester where everyone is so hateful to her."

"Hello, Kitty, what are you doing? Not packing yet?" The half-open door swung wide, and Myra, with nearly a dozen followers, trailed into the room and immediately took possession of the beds and other available furniture. "Gee, but it does look forlorn to see

all those hooks empty and the dresser stripped of its decorations. Even the pictures on the wall are gone. What did you do it for?"

"My train goes to-night," Tabitha began.

"At eight o'clock from the Santa Fe," Myra jeered derisively, "and it is actually nine-thirty A. M. now. Almost twelve hours to spare. You bet I don't pack yet!"

"I should think you would want it done and out of the way," Tabitha suggested, shaking out the pretty gray cloak which Gloriana had worn the night of the Thanksgiving opera, and laying it carefully on top of the neat pile of dresses already packed in the big trunk. "I don't like the idea of packing at the very last minute."

"That is what Myra dotes on," laughed Bessie. "Don't you remember how she did when we went home for Christmas? Miss Pomeroy announced that the drayman was at the door before she had stowed away a rag, and she simply dumped everything she had into her trunk, hit or miss, without regard to rhyme or reason."

"But I was ready when he came for my luggage ten minutes later, wasn't I?" interrupted

Myra. "I don't like to see a naked room. They give me the shivers, and mine is bare enough now with all of Clara's truck gone. I decided to wait until bedtime before packing up."

"When does your train leave?" asked Grace politely.

"Seven in the morning."

The girls giggled.

"I wonder that you don't wait until morning then, to pack," suggested Julia.

"Perhaps I shall. In fact, I believe that would be a good plan. Then when I woke in the morning, I wouldn't be confronted by bare, white walls and a vacant dresser."

"But you have such a mess of things," expostulated Tabitha, scandalized at the idea. "You will be sure to overlook something, or break half that you do pack if you wait till then."

"Oh, I don't know! Clara's things took up quite considerable room. You would really be astonished. The place looks dismantled already. But I am mighty glad she is gone!"

"Myra Haskell! Aren't you ashamed of

yourself?" Bessie reproved her, though her eyes twinkled understandingly.

"No doubt I ought to be," Myra admitted, "but I don't feel much that way just now. Really, I think I deserve a medal for my good nature this year. It's not Paradise for a hoyden to live with a prig."

"Then you ought to be thankful that she has graduated and you won't draw her for a room-mate next year."

"Oh, I am delighted that she has made her exit all right, but I should have shaken her just the same if she had come back. One year with a don't-do-so and please-be-quiet-while-I-meditate and won't-you-kindly-take-your-feet-off-the-table and I-do-wish-you-were-more-of-a-gentlewoman is all I can stand. I'm going to have Gwynne for my partner next fall."

"Who said so?"

"Gwynne."

"Well, you are a cool one!" cried Bessie, who had also lost her room-mate through graduation and wanted Gwynne to take the vacant place.

"Why so? Cassandra will be in the other building next year, and we older girls will

have all this place to ourselves. That means there will be a lot of new girls—just twice as many in the school as there have ever been before—and I have taken my chances with all the new girls I want to. Gwynne and I will make a first-rate team, and I think we can persuade Miss Pomeroy to feel the same way."

"What a lot of changes will take place when we get back here again," sighed Tabitha, suddenly realizing that Myra's words were true. "No one but High School students will be in this building. All the younger girls will have a court by themselves. It will seem queer at first, won't it?"

"But we'll like it," said Julia. "I never did fancy having the little girls room with us older ones. That was Miss Pomeroy's hobby at first, but I guess she found that it didn't work out real well, for this year we were more evenly mated. I had little Nellie Keyes the first term I was here, but now I have Grace, and it is lots more sociable. Whom are you going to chum with next fall, Kitty? Is Carrie coming back?"

Chrystobel glanced furtively at Tabitha, still absorbed in her task of folding and laying

away her stock of pretty clothes, but the black-eyed girl saw only Gloriana's suitcase in the corner, and answered somewhat wearily, "I don't know. I am through worrying about room-mates. Miss Pomeroy can settle that question to her own satisfaction."

The girls exchanged puzzled glances. What had come over Tabitha all at once? Had she learned that Carrie Carson would not be returning to Ivy Hall in September, or—following the black eyes, roving restlessly about the room, they saw what had escaped their attention before, Gloriana's wardrobe packed and waiting in the corner. So she had not already gone, as they had imagined. They had wondered a little that she had neglected to say good-bye, for they were genuinely sorry that she was not to be one of their number the next term, and wanted to tell her so, but concluded that she had purposely slipped away to avoid the ordeal of leave-taking from her new friends. Tabitha, too, was sorry, and that accounted for her preoccupied manner and curt replies.

Bessie, with ready tact, agreed, "Yes, that is the best way. Miss Pomeroy is always fair,

—that's one consolation. I had hoped Gwynne would go in with me, but if Myra has already corralled her, I'll have to find someone else. Perhaps I shall draw Elsie Dane. Who knows?"

"Elsie is a mighty sweet girl," Julia answered seriously. "She camped near us at Lake Tahoe last summer, and I scraped up a slight acquaintance with her. She will be a Freshman, won't she? Seemed to me that was what Miss Pomeroy said."

"Are you going camping this summer?" asked Jessie with animation. "We are planning on an outing in the mountains. I have never really camped before, and I'd like to know how it seems."

"It's great," Myra broke in. "Your daily diet is spiders and centipedes, with a few rattlesnakes thrown in, and you drink tadpoles and minnows in your coffee. Oh, camping is rich! But you want to learn to shoot before you go, else you will be devoured alive by mosquitoes."

"Myra!" protested Julia in shocked tones. "Sometimes I don't wonder poor Clara had such a time with you. Camping is—"

"Here comes the mail, here comes the mail,"

chanted Kate Magee to the tune of Lohengrin, as she stamped heavily up the stairs with her hands full of letters; and instantly the congregation on Tabitha's bed stampeded for the hall, clamoring for their share.

"Not any for you, Myra Haskell; your doting family have forsaken you. No, I take it all back, here is one. Two for Bess; three for Chrystie; one postcard for Julia; a paper for Jessie; *Youth's Companion* for Nina; two cards for Grace; a letter for Kit; and one for Gloriana. I beat you all. Got two letters, four postcards, a magazine and an old advertisement myself. How is that for the last day?"

Mechanically Tabitha received her letter and laid Gloriana's on the bare dresser, not even noting that the same hand had addressed them both; and for the next few minutes there was a hurried tearing of envelopes and rustling of paper in the room. Then Tabitha gasped—such a queer, choking, sobbing, exultant gasp that her busy companions dropped their mail to inquire, "Why, Kitty, what's up?"

But the black-eyed girl had leaped to her feet, and without a word of explanation, was

speeding down the winding stairway on the wings of the wind, it seemed. Out into the garden she ran, behind the dense hedge, under an overhanging screen of honeysuckle, disappearing completely from view.

But the puzzled girls watching her unceremonious flight, from the window above, heard her cry out joyously, "Glory, oh, Glory, wake up! Such glorious news!" But that was all.

"Now what do you suppose ails her?" asked Grace, nearly breaking her neck leaning over the window-sill trying to catch the rest of the conversation in the garden below.

"She dropped her letter as she ran," said Myra, rescuing the wrinkled sheet from the floor and smoothing it out over her knee.

"But it wouldn't be right to read it," demurred Bessie faintly, as the rest of the girls clustered around Myra on the bed.

"I don't believe she would care," replied Jessie, whose curiosity was insatiable.

"If it had been a secret, she would have hung onto her letter, you bet," added Myra, who was very inquisitive herself, and rather heedless of fine scruples in consequence.

"Perhaps she would rather tell us herself

than to have us prying into her private correspondence," suggested Bessie, still hesitating.

But Myra's keen eyes had swiftly swept the closely-written page, and even while her companions were arguing the right and wrong of the matter, she uttered a wild whoop of excitement. "Oh, girls, isn't this the best ever? Mr. Catt wants to adopt Gloriana! Of course she will say yes, and the poor little mite will have a home of her own. He says he intended to be present at Commencement and talk the subject over in person, but was detained the very last minute, so had no alternative but to write. Those are his very words. He has written Gloriana, too."

"That must be the letter on the dresser," mused Bessie; and Grace, turning it over, replied, "Yes, it is the same writing."

"Isn't that lovely? Just like a fairy story! Now she will come back to Ivy Hall."

"Oh, I am so glad!" cried Chrystobel. "I was going to propose that we girls take up a collection this summer—earn the money ourselves somehow—so that she might have another year at Ivy, at least. But now that's all fixed up, and our part will be just to make her

as happy as we can. We certainly ought to be willing to do that much. She is a darling, even if she is so shy and quiet."

"Do you suppose Kitty knew about it before? She answered so queerly in regard to the room-mate question."

"No, I don't think she did," replied Myra, who was re-reading the letter on her knee more carefully. "Her father doesn't write as if she had any inkling of it, although I judge she had asked him some questions about bringing Glory home with her, for here he says that if Gloriana will consider taking the place of sister to Kit, she will stay with her always instead of merely spending the summer there. Who is Granny Conover?"

"Why, isn't that the name of the old lady who took care of Glory the last few years?" asked Julia.

"Oh, perhaps it is. He says he is sorry to hear that she has been having such a hard time of it, but he has sent her a Jersey cow to take the place of the nanny goat she lost, and a check for one hundred dollars to help put her on her feet again. Say, isn't he a dandy father? Why, my dad would never remember

what I had been talking about, when I got through telling him anything; and I don't believe he ever reads my letters. Always turns them over to the mater because he can't disfigure—I mean decipher my hieroglyphics. Gee! I'd give anything to have him as interested in my affairs as Kitty's dad is in hers. She has only to ask him once, and he does it straight away."

"Sh!" warned Chrystobel, who was perched on the corner of the open trunk near the door. "Someone is coming."

"Drop the letter where you found it, Myra," whispered Jessie nervously. "It may be Kitty."

"Then I shall hold it in plain view until I am certain," was Myra's answer; for it was not in her make-up to hide any dishonorable act of hers, and she still clutched the crumpled paper over her knee when Tabitha entered, with her arm around the wondering-eyed Gloriana.

"We know all about it, dear," said Bessie, as the two figures halted in the doorway.

"Read your letter, you know," supplemented truthful Myra. "We simply couldn't wait till you got back to break the good news, so when

we saw you had forgotten the letter in your flight, we just—naturally read it."

"Curiosity killed a cat," laughed Tabitha, a trifle hysterically. "Then if you have stolen my thunder, perhaps you can convince Gloriana that dad really wrote what I told her he did."

"Maybe her own letter will convince her better," suggested Chrystobel, passing the second envelope out to the bewildered red-haired girl.

"Gracious! I forgot all about *her* letter," exclaimed Tabitha in laughable dismay. "Here, read it, and then say I dreamed it all! Oh, girls, isn't it the loveliest thing that I am going to have a sister? I have always wanted one, and it is as dad says, the older we get, the less I shall see of Tom, for he has graduated from college now and will be entering business for himself soon. And we have already proved that Carrie and I can't have each other all the time. What does dad say to you, Glory? Will you go home with me?"

"Yes," whispered Gloriana tremulously, entirely overcome by the brief but tender message addressed to her. "I will go!" Throwing her arms about Tabitha's neck, she held

the taller girl in a grip more expressive than any words she could have uttered; and the audience, suddenly remembering their manners, got clumsily to their feet.

"Guess I'll go pack," yawned Myra, and the rest of her followers trailed out of the room behind her.

THE END